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Hein de Haas\*

## Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective

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## Abstract

This paper aims to put the debate on migration and development in a broader historical perspective of migration theory in particular and social theory in general. The scholarly debate on migration and development has tended to swing back and forth like a pendulum, from developmentalist optimism in the 1950s and 1960s, to structuralist and neo-Marxist pessimism and scepticism over the 1970s and 1980s, to more nuanced views influenced by the new economics of labour migration, “livelihood” approaches and the transnational turn in migration studies as of the 1990s. Such discursive shifts in the scholarly debate on migration and development should be primarily seen as part of more general paradigm shifts in social theory. The shift that occurred over the 1990s was part of a more general shift away from grand structuralist or functionalist theories towards more pluralist, hybrid and structuralist approaches attempting to reconcile structure and actor perspectives. However, attempts to combine different theoretical perspectives are more problematic than sometimes suggested due to incommensurability issues and associated disciplinary divisions.

Since 2000, there has been a remarkable, and rather sudden, renaissance of optimistic views, in particular in the policy debate, as well as a boom in empirical work on migration and development. This has coincided with the rediscovery of remittances as a “bottom up” source of development finance and the celebration of the transnational engagement of migrants with the development of their origin societies. However, such optimism has tended to go along with a striking level of amnesia of decades of prior research. Migration and development is anything but a new topic. The accumulated empirical and theoretical evidence stress the fundamentally heterogeneous nature of migration-development interactions as well as their contingency on spatial and temporal scales of analysis and more general processes of social and economic change, which should forestall any blanket assertions on migration-development interactions.

Current policy and scholarly discourses naively celebrating migration, remittances and transnational engagement as self-help development “from below” also shift attention away from the relevance of structural constraints and the important role states and other institutions play in shaping favourable general conditions for social and economic development to occur. This raises the fundamental question whether the recent shift towards optimistic views reflects a veritable change in (increasingly transnationally framed) migration-development interactions, the use of other methodological and analytical tools, or is rather the deductive echo of a general paradigm shift from dependency and state-centrist to neoliberal and neoclassical views in general.

The lack of theoretical rootedness and largely descriptive nature of much empirical work has haunted the improvement of theories. As a result of the general lack of a common theoretical thread, most empirical work – especially from outside migration economics – remains isolated, scattered, and theoretically underexplored. Real progress in the understanding of the factors determining the fundamental *heterogeneity* of migration and development interactions is only possible if more empirical work is designed to test theoretically derived hypotheses and, hence, to improve the generalized understanding of migration-development interactions.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In the past few years there has been a remarkable renaissance in the interest in the issue of migration and development in migrant-sending societies by policy makers and scholars (Kapur 2003; Ratha 2003). This has coincided with a radical shift from pessimistic to optimistic views on the issue. Against the previous climate of widespread scepticism on the issue of migration and development (Massey et al 1998:260), this is a remarkable phenomenon, to say the least.

This interest has undoubtedly been triggered by a striking increase in remittance flows. Remittances sent back to developing countries rose from \$31.1 billion in 1990 to \$76.8 billion in 2000 to \$167.0 billion in 2005. There is a growing belief that remittances are a more effective instrument for income redistribution, poverty reduction and economic growth than large, bureaucratic development programmes or development aid (Kapur 2003). After decades of pessimism and concerns on brain drain, governments of migrant sending countries have put renewed hopes on transnationally oriented migrants and ‘Diasporas’ as potential investors and actors of development (De Haas & Plug 2006; Gamlen 2006).

Migration and development is anything but a new topic. However, the recent re-discovery of the migration-development nexus tends to go along with a striking level of amnesia of the insights that have emerged from decades of prior research and policy experience with the issue. Table 1 depicts these main phases in the post-WWII academic and policy debate on migration and development. It shows how the scholarly and policy debates on migration and development have tended to swing back and forth like a pendulum from sheer optimism to sheer pessimism, and back again to optimistic views in recent years.

The optimistic views on migration and development that often prevail today testify to a lack of awareness of the substantial body of empirical and theoretical literature as well as past policy experiences with the issue. This amnesia explains why much current empirical work hardly builds on and connects to prior empirical work. The accumulated empirical evidence highlights the sheer *heterogeneity* of migration-development interactions in migrant-sending communities and regions, which should forestall any blanket assertions on migration-development interactions.

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Oliver Bakewell for his valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.



Another weakness of migration and development research has been the tendency to study *causes* and *impacts* of migration separately, which constitute largely separate strands of migration literature. This is unfortunate, since the developmental factors influencing migration decisions are also likely to shape the development outcomes in sending countries and communities (Taylor 1999). More in general, the scholarly debate has tended to separate the developmental causes (determinants) and effects (impacts) of migration artificially from more general processes of social (including economic)<sup>2</sup> change. There is a clear need to study migration impacts in their wider societal context, and to see how migration (1) is a process which is an integral part of broader transformation processes embodied in the term “development”, but (2) also has its internal, self-sustaining and self-undermining dynamics, and (3) impacts on such transformation processes in its own right.

**Table 1. Main phases in migration and development research and policies**

<i>Period</i>	<i>Research community</i>	<i>Policy field</i>
until 1973	Development and migration optimism	Developmentalist optimism; capital and knowledge transfers by migrants would help developing countries in development take-off.
1973-1990	Development and migration pessimism (dependency, brain drain)	Growing scepticism; concerns on brain drain; after experiments with return migration policies focused on integration in receiving countries. Migration largely out of sight in development field.
1990-2001	Readjustment to more subtle views under influence of increasing empirical work (NELM, livelihood approaches, transnationalism)	Persistent scepticism; tightening of immigration policies.
> 2001	Boom in publications: mixed, but generally positive views.	Resurgence of migration and development optimism under influence of remittance boom, and a sudden turnaround of views: brain gain, diaspora involvement.

<sup>2</sup> We interpret “social” in its broader sense, that is, encompassing economic, cultural, and political dimensions of change. Thus, the term “social” is not employed in opposition to “economic”, because economic processes are seen as integral part of broader social processes.

Only through considering the causes and consequences of migration within a single theoretical perspective on migration and development, can we deepen our theoretical understanding of migration as an integral part of broader development processes. On the conceptual level, there has been a particularly inability to put the specific debate on migration and development in a broader perspective of migration theory in particular and social theory in general. Only by providing such as broader theoretical framework, can we improve structural insight into the nature and determinants of spatially and temporally heterogeneous migration-development interactions. This will help us to see how discursive shifts in the scholarly and policy debate on migration and development are an integral part of more general paradigm shifts in social theory. For instance, we will try to show how the shift that occurred in 1990s and 2000s was part of a more general shift away from grand structuralist or functionalism theories towards more pluralist, hybrid approaches as well as the shift towards the neoliberal paradigm in development policies.

Over the twentieth century, several theoretical perspectives on migration have evolved. However, they have generally evolved in isolation from one another, and show important differences in their level of analysis as well as paradigmatic and thematic orientation. One of the possible reasons for this lack of coherence is that migration has never been the exclusive domain of one of the social sciences, but has been studied by most of them. Differences in disciplinary and paradigmatic orientation and level of analysis have led to widespread controversy on the nature, causes, and consequences of migration. In their seminal review article, Massey et al. (Massey et al 1993:432) stated that popular thinking on international migration

remains mired in nineteenth-century concepts, models, and assumptions . . . a full understanding of contemporary migration processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone, or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex, multifaceted nature requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumptions.

Over the past decades, several migration researchers have bemoaned the absence of a comprehensive migration theory, and there have been numerous calls or attempts to develop just such a general migration theory (Lee 1966; Massey et al 1998; Zelinsky 1971). Among the main reasons explaining why it is so difficult to generalize about the causes and consequences of migration are the diversity and complexity of the phenomenon as well as the difficulty of separating migration from other socio-economic and political processes. Moreover, it is often difficult to combine macro- and micro-level theories of migration. This has led scholars to conclude that there will probably never be a general theory on migration (Salt 1987; Van Amersfoort 1998).

Up to the early 1980s, the theoretical debate on migration tended to be rather polarized, with neo-classical views on the one hand and historical-structuralist views (neo-Marxist, dependency, world systems) on the other. Since then, however, under the influence of postmodernism, the debate has become less polarized and has been characterized by increasing synergy between migration theorists from different disciplines and paradigmatic backgrounds. Moreover, it has been frequently argued that it is possible to (eclectically) combine and integrate different theoretical perspectives on migration, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Massey et al 1993). Although it would be naïve to assume that an all-encompassing and all-explaining meta-theory on migration will ever arise, there is undoubtedly more room for theorizing on migration processes and how they connect with broader processes of development.

Besides a general lack of awareness of prior theoretical and empirical work, it seems particularly the fragmentation of migration studies and the related inability to embed empirical work into a broader theoretical perspective on development, and, consequently, to reciprocally connect the developmental causes and consequences of migration, that has haunted migration and development studies so far. In another paper, I have reviewed the empirical evidence on how migration and remittances effect development in sending societies (De Haas 2007c). This paper aims to critically review how specific theories on migration-development interactions that have evolved over the past half century relate to shifts in migration theory in particular and social theory in general. Through this analysis, this paper aims to elaborate the contours of a conceptual framework for analysing migration and development interactions within a broader social theory perspective.

This paper will start by examining general theories of migration, which mainly focus on the causes of migration and the feedback mechanisms through which population movements are perpetuated. This is a deliberate choice, since if we believe that the causes and consequences of migration are strongly interrelated, and part of the same general processes of social and economic transformation, the circumstances that cause migration will equally affect the (reciprocal) effects of migration on development in sending societies. For instance, it matters whether labour migration is to be seen as a desperate flight from misery by impoverished people forced to migrate or a voluntary endeavour by young, ambitious people to acquire sufficient capital to invest in their own enterprise upon return. Without a proper insight into the developmental causes of migration, assessing its impacts risks becoming a fuzzy affair. Moreover, general paradigmatic stances towards migration (e.g., neo-classical vs. structuralist interpretations) will greatly influence the analysis of empirical data on localized developmental impacts and the interpretation of empirical results.

After discussing *general* theories on the causes of migration which provide the overall framework of analysis, the paper will discuss *specific* theoretical perspectives on the impact of internal and international migration on development in migrant sending societies in the developing world. First, we will look at opposing traditional “optimistic” and “pessimistic” views, and analyzing their intimate connections with general functionalist and structuralist strands of social and development theory. Subsequently, we will present alternative, more pluralist and apparently more refined views on migration and development that have emerged more recently. We will argue that the “new economics of labour migration”, household-oriented “livelihood approaches” and the transnationalism school of migration research, are part of a similar trend towards more pluralist approaches, sometimes associated to structuration theory, which try to reconcile actor and structure approaches. When combined, these approaches offer a conceptual framework which is better able to deal with the inherently heterogeneous nature of migration-development interactions. The paper will conclude by discussing the shortcomings of recent approaches as well as perspectives for future theoretical advancement.

## 2. General migration theories

### 2.1. The neo-classical equilibrium perspective

The first scholarly contribution to migration consisted of two articles by the nineteenth century geographer Ravenstein (1885; 1889), in which he formulated his “laws of migration”. He saw migration as an inseparable part of development, and he asserted that the major causes of migration were economic. Migration patterns were further assumed to be influenced by factors such as distance and population densities (Skeldon 1997:19). This perspective, in which people are expected to move from low income to high income areas, and from densely to sparsely populated areas, that is, the general notion that migration movements tend towards a certain spatial-economic equilibrium, has remained alive in the work of many demographers, geographers, and economists ever since (Castles & Miller 2003:22), and, as we will see, is also the underlying assumption of push-pull theories.

Although the issue of migration has not attracted substantial attention within mainstream economic theory itself (Bauer & Zimmermann 1998:95; Lee 1966:48; Passaris 1989-7), economic explanations have nonetheless dominated popular and scholarly thinking on migration. At the macro-level, neo-classical economic theory explains migration by geographical differ-

ences in the supply and demand for labour. The resulting differentials in wages cause workers to move from low-wage, labour-surplus regions to high-wage, labour-scarce regions. Migration will cause labour to become less scarce at the destination and scarcer at the sending end. Capital is expected to move in the opposite direction. In a perfectly neo-classical world, this process of “factor price equalization” (the Heckscher-Ohlin model) will eventually result in growing convergence between wages at the sending and receiving end (Harris & Todaro 1970; Lewis 1954; Ranis & Fei 1961; Schiff 1994; Todaro & Maruszko 1987). In the long run, this process would remove the incentives for migrating.

At the micro-level, neo-classical migration theory views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation. Assuming free choice and full access to information, they are expected to go where they can be the most productive, that is, are able to earn the highest wages. This capacity obviously depends on the specific skills a person possesses and the specific structure of labour markets.

Neo-classical migration theory sees rural-urban migration as an constituent part of the whole development process, by which surplus labour in the rural sector supplies the workforce for the urban industrial economy (Lewis 1954). By postulating that it “is a well-known fact of economic history that material progress usually has been associated with the gradual but continuous transfer of economic agents from rural based traditional agriculture to urban oriented modern industry” (Todaro 1969:139), neo-classical migration theory is firmly entrenched in “developmentalist” modernization theory based on teleological views interpreting seeing development as a linear, universal process consisting of successive stages (cf. Rostow 1960).

Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) elaborated the basic two-sector model of rural-to-urban labour migration. This influential “Harris-Todaro model” has remained the basis of neo-classical migration theory since then. The original model was developed in order to explain the apparently contradictory phenomenon of continuing rural-to-urban migration in developing countries despite rising unemployment in cities. The model was born out of discontent with vague and “amorphous explanations such as the “bright lights” of the city acting as a magnet to lure peasants into urban areas” (Harris and Todaro 1970:126). Harris and Todaro argued that, in order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to modify and extend the simple wage differential approach by looking “not only at prevailing income differentials as such but rather at the rural-urban “expected” income differential, i.e., the income differential adjusted for the probability of finding an urban job” (Todaro 1969:138).

The expected income in the destination area not only depends on the actual (or average) earnings at the destination, but also on the probability of employment. The assumption is that, as long as rural-urban income differences remain high enough to outweigh the risk of becoming unemployed, the “lure of relatively higher permanent incomes will continue to attract a steady stream of rural migrants” (Todaro 1969:147). Later, the Harris-Todaro model was refined to make it more realistic (Bauer and Zimmermann 1998:97). Modifications pertained to the inclusion of other factors than unemployment that influence the expected income gains that can be achieved through migration. The potential gains in the form of higher wages should be balanced with factors such as the opportunity costs of migration, the costs of travel, (temporary) unemployment while moving and installation at the destination, and the psychological costs of migration. In fact, as we will see, the costs and risks associated with, particularly international, migration explain why it is generally not the poorest who migrate and why social networks are so crucial in lowering the material and psychological thresholds to migration.

Although the Harris-Todaro model was initially developed for internal migration, it can, with some modifications, also be applied to international migration. Borjas (1989; 1990) postulated the idea of an international immigration market, in which potential migrants base the choice of destination on individual, cost-benefit calculations. Todaro and Maruszko (1987) developed a model for undocumented international migration, which takes the Harris-Todaro model as basis, but adds to it the probability of being captured and deported as well as the “illegality tax”.

Further extension of the model is possible by interpreting it within a human capital framework, in which migration is seen as an investment decision. In economic theory, human capital has increasingly been recognized as a crucial factor in the process of economic development in modernizing societies (Becker 1962; Sjaastad 1962). Human capital theory assumes that personal assets such as skills, education, and physical abilities are fundamental “capitals” that boost economic production. Human capital theory also enables to theoretically explain the selectivity of migration beyond explanations focusing only on costs. Migrants are typically not representative of the communities they come from. Considering that individuals are different in terms of personal skills, knowledge, physical abilities, age, sex, and so on, there will also be differences in the extent to which people are expected to gain from migrating, that is, they can expect diverging returns on their migration investment.

Differences in such expected “returns on investments” can partly explain diverging inter-individual propensities to migrate. Depending on the specific type of labour demand in migrant receiving areas, migrants will be selected depending on their specific skills and educa-

tional background. This makes it possible to explain theoretically why the likelihood of migration decreases with age and why individuals with higher education often exhibit a higher migration propensity. The most important analytical and methodological implication of this is that researchers should not only pay attention to aggregate labour market variables like wage and employment differences, but should also take into account the internal structure and segmentation of labour markets as well as the relevance of individual socio-economic characteristics and “capitals” in the migration decision (Bauer and Zimmermann 1998:99).

Many of the later refinements of neo-classical migration theory relate to the selectivity of migration. Without denying the importance of expected wage differentials, the likelihood of particular individuals and groups emigrating is also supposed to depend on both the costs and risks of migration and individual human capital characteristics. This makes migration selectivity also dependent on the specific structure and segmentation of labour markets determining chances to find employment as well as immigration policies. The combination of such factors may explain the heterogeneity and dynamism that characterize real-life migration systems.

Neo-classical migration theory can be positioned within the functionalist paradigm of social theory, as the central argument of factor price equalization assumes that economic forces tend towards an equilibrium and also because it largely ignores the existence of market imperfections and other structural constraints on development. This is hardly realistic, particularly in the context of many developing countries. Place utility and other micro-theories assume that migrants have perfect knowledge of the costs and benefits of migration (McDowell & de Haan 1997:9) and that people move across isotropic spaces.

In most developing countries, factor markets (capital, insurance) are typically far from perfect, making access to financial services and capital difficult or even impossible for marginalized groups. This makes actual migration patterns difficult to explain within a neo-classical framework that mainly focuses on expected income. Migration does not take place in a social, cultural, political, and institutional void. Neo-classical migration theory is also not able to deal with constraining factors such as government restrictions on migration.

Neo-classical migration economy has also been criticized for being a-historical and Eurocentric, supposing that migration (i.e., the transfer of labour from agricultural rural to industrial urban sectors) fulfils the same facilitating role in the ‘modernization’ of currently developing countries as it did in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. In fact, the structural conditions under which contemporary migration in and from developing countries takes place are rather different, although perhaps not fundamentally so (Skeldon 1997).

## 2.2. Historical-structural theory and asymmetric growth

A radically different interpretation of migration was provided as of the 1960s by the historical-structural paradigm on development, which has its intellectual roots in Marxist political economy and in world systems theory (Castles & Miller 2003:25). Contemporary historical-structural theory emerged in response to functionalist (neo-classical) and developmentalist-modernizationist approaches towards development. Historical-structuralists postulate that economic and political power is unequally distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities. Instead of modernizing and gradually progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure.

As in most fields of social science, historical-structuralism has dominated migration research in the 1970s and most of the 1980s. Historical structuralists have not developed a migration theory as such, but perceive migration as a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dislocations that are intrinsic to the process of capitalist accumulation. They interpret migration as one of the many manifestations of capitalist penetration and the increasingly unequal terms of trade between developed and underdeveloped countries (Massey et al 1998:36).

Andre Gunder Frank (1966a; 1969) was the frontrunner of the “dependency” theory, which hypothesized that global capitalism (and migration as one of its manifestations) contributed to the “development of underdevelopment” (see also Baran 1973). The dependency school views migration not just as detrimental to the economies of underdeveloped countries but also as one of the very *causes* of underdevelopment, rather than as a path towards development. According to this view, migration ruins stable peasant societies, undermines their economies and uproots their populations. Emmanuel Wallerstein’s (1974; 1980) world-systems theory classified countries according to their degree of dependency, and distinguished between the capitalist “core” nations, followed by the “semi-peripheral”, “peripheral”, and isolated nations in the “external” area, which were not (yet) included in the capitalist system. In this perspective, the incorporation of the peripheries into the capitalist economy is associated with putting a (migration) drain on them, exactly the opposite of factor price equalization presumed by neo-classical theory. Instead of flowing in the opposite direction of capital as predicted by neo-classical category, the idea is that labour follows where capital goes.

Historical structuralists have criticized neo-classical migration theory, stating that individuals do *not* have a free choice, because they are fundamentally constrained by structural forces.



Rather than a matter of free choice, people are forced to move because traditional economic structures have been undermined as a result of their incorporation into the global political-economic system. Through these processes, rural populations become increasingly deprived of their traditional livelihoods, and these uprooted populations become part of the urban proletariat to the benefit of those core areas that rely on cheap (immigrant) labour.

Historical structuralists have been criticized for being too determinist and rigid in their thinking in viewing individuals as victims or “pawns” that passively adapt to macro-forces, thereby largely ruling out individual agency. Moreover, rigid forms of historical structuralism have been refuted by recent history, as various formerly developing and labour exporting countries have achieved sustained economic growth in the past decades despite – or perhaps thanks to – their firm connection to global capitalism (Sen 1999). For most southern European countries and some “Asian Tigers”, the incorporation into global capitalism and, possibly, high labour migration have apparently worked out well, despite gloomy predictions some decades ago (Almeida 1973; Papademetriou 1985).

There is increasing consensus that capitalism as such cannot be blamed for the problems of underdevelopment, but that the specific developmental effects of incorporation of a region or country into the global capitalist system seems to depend much more on the conditions under which this takes place, that is, how the incorporation is embedded into wider institutional structures as well as the internal socio-political cohesion and economic strength of countries and regions. Thus, depending on these circumstances, the incorporation into global capitalism can have both positive and negative effects in different areas of development and on different groups of people within society. In the same vein, (labour) migration cannot automatically be interpreted as a desperate flight from misery, not only because it is seldom the poorest who migrate, but also because we can at least not *logically* rule out the possibility that migration facilitates development through reverse flows of capital (remittances), knowledge, ideas, attitudes, and people (return migration).

### 2.3. Questioning the push-pull framework

Both neo-classical and historical-structural theories of migration generally fail to explain why some people in a certain country or region migrate and others do not (Massey et al 1993; Reniers 1999:680), and why people tend to migrate between particular places in a spatially clustered, concentrated, typically non-random fashion. It can therefore be useful to look at some of the spatial models developed by mainly geographers and demographers.

Lee (1966) revised Ravenstein's 19<sup>th</sup> century laws on migration and proposed a new analytical framework for migration. In his view, the decision to migrate is determined by the following factors: factors associated with the area of origin; factors associated with the area of destination; so-called intervening obstacles (such as distance, physical barriers, immigration laws, and so on); and personal factors. Lee (1966:54-55) argued that migration tends to take place within well-defined "streams", from specific places at the origin to specific places at the destination, not only because opportunities tend to be highly localized but also because the flow of knowledge back from destination facilitates the passage for later migrants.

Lee also stated that migration is selective with respect to the individual characteristics of migrants because people respond differently to "plus" and "minus" factors at origins and destinations and have different abilities to cope with the intervening variables (Reniers 1999:681). Therefore, migrants are rarely representative of their community of origin. This is consistent with the neo-classical perspective which explains migration selectivity by individual differences in human capital endowments and the discriminating aspects of costs and risks associated with migration.

Although Lee did not apparently invent or employ the term himself<sup>3</sup>, his analytical framework is commonly referred to as the "push-pull" model (Passaris 1989). The push-pull model is basically an individual choice and equilibrium model, and is, therefore, largely analogous to neo-classical micro models. The push-pull model has gained enormous popularity in the migration literature and has become the dominant migration model in secondary and university education.

Most researchers who have applied the push-pull framework have assumed that various environmental, demographic, and economic factors determine migration decisions. Two main forces are typically distinguished to create the pushes and pulls: (1) rural population growth causing a Malthusian pressure on natural and agricultural resources, and pushing people out of marginal rural areas, and (2) economic conditions (higher wages) luring people into cities and industrialized countries (Skeldon 1997:20; cf. King and Schneider 1991:62-3; Schwartz and Notini 1994). At first sight, the push-pull model seems attractive, as it is apparently able to incorporate all the factors that play a role in migration decision-making. Because of its apparent ability to integrate other theoretical insights, it has been frequently suggested that a

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<sup>3</sup> The push-pull polarity has commonly, but undeservedly, been attributed to Lee (1966). For instance, Petersen (1958) already used the push-pull terminology, without however specifying its origins, which probably go back to the early twentieth century.

general view of labour migration could best be achieved using a push-pull framework (Bauer & Zimmermann 1998; Schoorl 1998:103).

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the push-pull framework is of much analytical use, and whether it can be called a theory at all. It is rather a descriptive model in which the different factors playing a role in migration decisions are enumerated in a relative arbitrary manner. As they are applied in practice, push-pull models tend to have the character of ad-hoc explanations forming a rather ambiguous depository of migration determinants. More problematic is the tendency of push-pull models to confuse different scales of analysis (ranging from individual to global) and do not allow for assigning relative weights to the different factors affecting migration decisions. Neither do they allow for empirical tests on the role and importance of factors that have been included or excluded. Analyses concluding that low wages, high population pressure or environmental degradation as opposed to better conditions at the destination 'cause' migration tend to be so general as to be more or less stating the obvious.

Push-pull models also tend to ignore the heterogeneity and internal stratification of societies, while general contextual factors habitually defined as either push or pull factors are likely to work out in a differentiated way on the individual level, and might subsequently encourage some people to leave and others to stay. Another fundamental weakness of this model is that push and pull factors are generally mirrored in each other. For example, the argument that migrants are lured to big cities or to foreign countries because of the high wage 'pull', is implicitly or explicitly made in relation to an apparent low wage 'push' at the sending end. It then becomes arbitrary and open to subjective judgment to establish whether the push or the pull is dominant. In fact, the differences in the relative scarcity of labour can be aptly expressed in one single variable, that is, wage differentials.

Push and pull factors then turn out to be two sides of the same coin: together they provide the perception of difference between "here" and "there", and therefore have limited heuristic value (cf. Wittmann 1975:23, cited in McDowell and De Haan 1997:9). Although the assumption that people tend to move from low to high wage areas might seem logical at first sight, this does not necessarily hold true at the individual level. Whether migration occurs crucially depends on the skills and knowledge of migrants and conditions in the specific economic sectors where they are likely to find employment both at the origin and destination. Such sectoral differences may even explain migration from areas (or countries) with higher *on average* wages to poorer areas. Moreover, as we will see later, the effect of wage and other opportunity differentials on migration rates is by no means linear. This all points to the limitations of equilibrium approaches such as the push-pull framework.

Besides wage differentials, factors such as population pressure, demographic pressure, or environmental degradation have commonly been postulated as “root causes” of migration (cf. (King & Schneider 1991; Schwartz et al 1994; Zachariah et al 2001). For example, Farrag (1997:319), stated for sub-Saharan Africa that

in addition to landlessness per se, emigration dynamics were clearly influenced by small farm size, marginal ecological conditions that render cash cropping unviable, depleted soil fertility caused by population pressure on limited land and low levels of farm income.

Nevertheless, apart from the fact that population or migration pressure are relative, difficult-to-grasp and often weakly defined concepts, such factors alone cannot explain why people move and also fail to see migration as a social *process*. People do not typically move from places because they expect to find a ‘better environment’ or ‘less population pressure’, but because they expect to be able to make a more satisfying living elsewhere. In fact, many migrants tend to move from areas with relatively low population densities and relatively little environmental degradation to environmentally degraded areas with high population densities. People tend to be increasingly concentrated in crowded places—cities, towns, and prosperous agricultural areas—that, however, in spite of their crowdedness generally offer better social and economic opportunities in terms of individual freedom, safety, education, health care, paid labour, entrepreneurial activities and amusement. This further illustrates the limitations and potential triviality of “push-pull” explanations.

The general problem with these kinds of more or less neo-Malthusian explanations is that they tend to single out environmental factors in relation to population pressure as “causes” of migration. Although environmental factors might indeed play an important role, they should be seen in relation to other political, economic, social, and cultural factors that eventually determine standards of living and inequality of access to resources. Moreover, explanations focusing on natural endowments continue to implicitly perceive migrant sending areas as closed, self-sustaining regions and communities relying on subsistence agriculture. Even if this ever were true, this closed-regions image is increasingly far from reality in a globalizing world, in which even the most remote regions are becoming increasingly linked to the outside world through infrastructure, trade, and migration, and in which rural economies are also becoming increasingly diversified (Bebbington 1999).

In the same vein, population growth, which has often been postulated as a “cause” of migration pressure, is clearly only one component of a complex chain of processes, and can only be applied if the *ceteris paribus* trick is made (cf. Coleman 1999:486-487). Time and again, “population pressure” is (too) narrowly defined in terms of people per square kilometer of

farmland, without taking into account potential productivity increases and the income earned in non-agricultural sectors. In fact, the whole gamut of economic conditions and access to various economic resources determines the extent to which different groups within society are able to make what they perceive as a satisfactory living.

Moreover, the propensity to migrate crucially depends on the aspirations of people, an element which is typically ignored by neoclassical, structuralist and push-pull models—in which needs are somehow assumed to be constant—but is essential in explaining migration. After all, aspirations are typically not constant, and it is often the level of aspiration that determines perceived “overpopulation” in relation to local economic opportunities (cf. Petersen 1958:259). For instance, increased wealth in combination with improved education, increased media exposure, and the (concomitant) confrontation with the higher wealth of other people may increase feelings of relative deprivation, and may give rise to higher aspiration levels and, therefore, increased migration, as long as increases in aspirations outpace increases in local opportunities. Moreover, slight increases in absolute wealth may enable many more people to bear the opportunity costs and risks of migrating. Therefore, decreased wage and other opportunity differentials often lead to *increased* migration.

Analogous to related neo-classical economic models, the push-pull model can be criticized for unrealistically viewing migration as a cost-benefit calculation by individuals, without paying attention to structural constraints, which imply that people typically have unequal access to resources. It is essentially a functionalist gravity-model which supposes a tendency towards equilibrium between push and pull factors, an assumption which has rightfully been contested by historical structuralists. The push-pull model assumes full and equal access to information and various resources or “capitals”, and humans are portrayed as more or less atomistic individuals that operate in an institutional, social, and cultural void. Furthermore, the push-pull model, as it is usually interpreted<sup>4</sup>, does not take into account how migrants perceive their worlds and relate to their kin, friends, and community members (Cross et al 1998).

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to stress that Lee (1966) explicitly stated that people take migration decisions on the basis of *perceived* differences between the origin and destination. Nevertheless, scholars who worked with push-pull models did generally not elaborate on this point. Lee’s writing is in fact subtler than later interpretations of his model. Reading Lee, one wonders how many ‘push-pull scholars’ actually read his 1966 article. Although the push-pull model—as it is commonly interpreted—seems of little use for our theoretical understanding of migration and development linkages, Lee’s insights into the geographical clustering of migration streams through reverse information flows are still valuable.

Finally, and partly because of its ignorance of personal aspirations, push-pull models are also not able to explain return migration and the simultaneous occurrence of emigration and immigration from and to the same locality or area, nor do they pay attention to the impacts of migration, and the way it may alter the structural contexts both at the destination and origin. In other words, the push-pull model is a *static* model focusing on external factors that “cause” migration that is unable to analytically situate migration as an integral part of broader transformation *processes*, and therefore seems of limited analytical use.

### 3. Towards a transitional migration theory

Equilibrium and push-pull models of migration, which basically see migration as the outcome of spatial differentials in development levels between the origin and destination areas, seen in dichotomous terms, are generally inconsistent with the much more complex empirically observed migration patterns and also tend to undervalue migrants’ agency, perceptions and aspirations. Fortunately, there have been attempts by geographers, demographers, sociologists, anthropologists and, more recently, economists that go beyond rather concepts supposing a linear, static link between migration and (expected) income and other opportunity differentials, but which instead try to model how migration and broader processes of development are reciprocally related, and how the character and development role of migration might change in the course of development processes. These dynamic or — as they will be referred to in this paper — *transitional* models of migration-development interconnections will be at the center of this section.

#### 3.1. The mobility transition

In order to achieve a more dynamic and realistic view of migration-development interconnections, it seems useful to draw on the spatio-temporal theoretical perspectives developed by Zelinsky (1971) and Skeldon (1997). There have been various attempts to link the demographic transition theory to changing patterns of population mobility. The first more comprehensive “spatio-temporal” approach was Zelinsky’s (1971) hypothesis of the mobility transition, which was a fusion between the demographic transition theory, the notion of the spatial diffusion of innovations, the economic principle of least effort or economic optimization, and the hypotheses developed by Lee (1966) (see previous section).

Zelinsky's (1971) hypothesis of the mobility transition links the "vital transition" to the "mobility transition". He argued that through the development of scientific knowledge, "modern man" had extended control over his own physiology in the form of death and birth control, resulting in the demographic transition. He preferred to use the term *vital transition*, by means of which he broadened the concept of demographic transition by linking it to processes of modernization, economic growth, and increasing mobility. In many respects, this *vital transition* can be equated with what many others would call *development*.

He distinguished five phases of the vital transition: (a) The pre-modern traditional society (high fertility and mortality, little natural increase if any); (b) The early transitional society (rapid decline in mortality, major population growth); (c) The late transitional society (major decline in fertility, significant but decelerating natural increase); (d) The advanced society (fertility and mortality stabilised at low levels, slight population increase if any); and (e) A future "superadvanced" society (continuing low fertility and mortality). The core of his argument was that each of these phases was linked to distinct forms of mobility, in a process that Zelinsky coined as the mobility transition.

Zelinsky (1971:230-1) argued that there has not only been a *general* and spectacular expansion of individual mobility in modernizing societies, but also that the specific character of migration processes tends to change over the course of this vital transition. Pre-modern societies (phase (a)) are characterised mainly by limited circular migration. In the early stages of the vital transition (phase (b), in particular), all forms of mobility (circular, rural colonisation frontiers, internal rural-urban, international) increase. In phase (c), international migration decreases rapidly, rural-to-urban internal migration slackens, but remains at high levels and circular movements further increase and grow in structural complexity. At the end of phase (c), the *rural exodus* significantly decreases, as the number of those employed in agricultural production approaches the minimum level associated with optimum economic return. In phase (d), residential mobility, urban-to-urban and circular migration become more important and, in this phase countries transform themselves from net emigration to net immigration countries because of mounting immigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers from developing countries. In phase (e), most internal migration is urban-urban and residential, while immigration of labourers continues.

Zelinsky's approach was innovative, because it conceived various functionally related forms of migration within a broader spatio-temporal development perspective, which did not naively assume an inversely proportional relationship between development and migration levels. It also differentiates between various kinds of labour mobility, internal and international, long-term as well as circular movement, and proposes to integrate them within one single analyti-

cal framework. It is also a diffusionist model, which assumes that the migration experience tends to spread progressively from relatively developed zones to less developed zones, which seems rather consistent with empirical evidence.

As such, the mobility transition theory fits rather well into the broader theoretical perspective on migration and development that we are attempting to develop in this paper by acknowledging the fact that migration tends to increase in particular in the early phases of “development”, in which improvements in transport and communication, flows of knowledge, a perceived lack of local economic opportunities, and growing level of welfare increase both the *capabilities* and *aspirations* of people to migrate. Although the character of migration changes, development processes do not so much lead to a general decrease in migration, but are rather associated to increased mobility *in general*. This is the most fundamental reason why “development instead of migration” policies are bound to fail (De Haas 2006b).

As neo-classical migration theory, Zelinsky’s hypothesis is profoundly rooted in modernisation theory (cf. Rostow 1960), which has also been the main subject of later criticism. Zelinsky’s mobility transition is a universal model, as it assumes that all societies undergo the same kind of processes. Its universalistic pretensions are not only its strength, but also its main weakness. Like neo-classical migration theory, the model is a-historical in suggesting that there is a single, unilinear path towards development whereas, in reality, migration and development do not affect areas in the same way (Findlay et al 1998). There is evidence that the sequence of mobility change proposed by Zelinsky on the basis of the European experience does necessarily exactly apply to contemporary developing countries (Skeldon 1992). Also the demographic transition and associated mortality and fertility declines have shown considerable diversity in different historical and geographical settings (Hirschman 1994). Furthermore, contemporary developing countries tend to experience much faster demographic transitions than was the case in northern Europe (Kirk 1996:368).

Mobility transition theory has also been criticised for its failure to specify the actual causal relation between demographic transitions and mobility change as well as its erroneous assumption of largely immobile traditional societies (Skeldon 1997:32-34). First, the causal relationship between demographic change and migration is rather *indirect* than direct and, therefore, fundamentally non-deterministic. After all, people do not migrate “because of” population growth. If population growth coincides with high economic growth, such as in most Gulf states, most people will not emigrate. In the same vein, stagnant populations may experience high emigration under unfavourable economic or political conditions, such as has been the case in several East European countries.



Second, perceptions that migration is a new phenomenon are based on the “myth of the immobile peasant” (Skeldon 1997:7-8), that is, the implicit assumption in much of (Western) popular and scholarly thinking that pre-modern societies consisted of relatively isolated, stable, static, homogeneous peasant communities, in which migration was fairly exceptional (cf. McDowell and De Haan 1997:3). Petersen (1958:258) already argued that also the familiar push-pull polarity implies a universal sedentary tendency, which has little empirical basis. The idea that the Industrial Revolution uprooted peasants from their stable communities for the first time was in fact a romanticized elitist view of peasant life (Skeldon 1997:32). Historical research on Europe and Japan and in present-day rural developing societies has shown that ‘traditional’ peasant societies are, and have generally been, highly mobile (De Haan 1999; Moch 1992; Rubenstein 1992:127; Skeldon 1997:8). In fact, the same criticism applies to historical structural views on migration and development, which sees capitalism uprooting once “stable” and largely immobile village communities.

Yet the validity of this criticism does not necessarily upset the more fundamental idea of Zelinky’s hypothesis: there is a fundamental, but complex and non-linear relationship between occurrence of specific forms of migration and more general socio-economic and demographic development processes. With out any doubt, this is an empirically more realistic hypothesis than neoclassical, structuralist and push-pull models. Although the historical conditions under which migration within and from the developing world occurs are different from those of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there seems to be little that is *unique* about these processes and they way they are connected to broader social, economic, cultural, demographic and technological transformations. It would therefore be unwise to reject generalizing transitional models out of hand (cf. Skeldon 1997:40).

Although migration as such is not new phenomenon, its character has, however, fundamentally changed due to revolutionary technological and infrastructural developments and the incorporation of regions and countries across the globe within international capitalism. This process of global economic integration started with European mercantile and colonial expansion—some say even earlier—and further accelerated after the Industrial Revolution. The major advances in transport and communication technology in the second half of the twentieth century have further facilitated, accelerated and transformed this globalization process. The enormous reduction in costs of transportation and communication have facilitated the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world, and the breaking down of barriers that have facilitated the increasing flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, ideas, and—although perhaps to a lesser extent—people across borders (Stiglitz 2002:9). As we will see, in particular the recent transportation and telecommunication revolutions have dra-

matically expanded the opportunities for migrants and their families to maintain transnational ties, to maintain transnational livelihoods and to construct transnational identities.

Beginning in the seventeenth century North Sea countries, and further extending throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the spatial diffusion of processes of economic modernization, technological breakthroughs and capitalist industrial expansion has resulted in massive rural-to-urban migration within Europe and North America (cf. Moch 1992). Moreover, tens of millions of Europeans—over 50 million between 1870 and 1914 alone (Nayyar 2000)—migrated to the Americas, and other colonies around the world. In most currently developing countries, processes of large-scale rural-to-urban migration and *voluntary*<sup>5</sup> international labour migration over long distances have gained momentum in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, and can hardly be dissociated from the connected and overlapping processes of the progressive incorporation of peasant economies into the capitalist economy and globalization.

Although migration as such is not a new phenomenon, contemporary, ‘modern’ patterns of migration are in a way unique and fundamentally different from those in pre-industrial societies in geographical scope and probably also in intensity. This is the point Zelinsky tried to make by pointing out how interrelated processes of demographic and economic change embodied in the term modernisation have fundamentally affected global migration patterns. By making a global regionalisation of migratory movements, Skeldon (1997) did a comprehensive and valuable effort to build upon and improve Zelinsky’s original model. Skeldon (1997:52) argued that

there is a relationship between the level of economic development, state formation and the patterns of population mobility. Very generally, we can say that where these are high, an integrated migration system exists consisting of global and local movements, whereas where they are low the migration systems are not integrated and mainly local.

Skeldon (1997: 52-53) distinguished the following five ‘development tiers’: the (1) old and (2) new core countries (e.g., Western Europe, North America, Japan) characterised by immigration and internal decentralisation; (3) the expanding core (e.g., eastern China, South-Africa,

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<sup>5</sup> One notable exception was the slave trade, an extremely violent form of forced migration to be distinguished from contract labourers or other more-or-less voluntary labour migrants. It is believed that more than 15 million people were taken from Africa to Europe, North America, and the Caribbean between the mid sixteenth and early nineteenth century (Nayyar 2000:2). Notwithstanding the massive scale of the trans-Atlantic slave trade set up by Europeans, African-European, African-African, and African-Arab slave trade as such is a much older phenomenon.

eastern Europe), where we find both immigration and out-migration and internal centralisation (i.e., urbanisation and rural-to-urban migration); (4) the labour frontier (e.g., Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Mexico, the Philippines and, until recently, Spain and Portugal), which are dominated by out-migration and internal centralisation; and the so-called (5) “resource niche” (e.g., many sub-Saharan African countries, parts of central Asia and Latin America), with variable, often weaker forms of migration. Besides building upon Zelinsky’s work, this regionalisation can also be seen as a migration-specific application of centre-periphery models and world system theory.

There is now ample empirical evidence that, in general, socio-economic ‘development’ in combination with demographic transition-related high population growth tends initially to lead to an increasing diffusion of (initially internal, later international) migration across communities (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998). The countries with the lowest GNP and the highest population growth do generally *not* exhibit the highest rates of out-migration to the Western world (cf. Böhning, 1994; Olesen, 2002). Although there is room to criticize the portrayal of regions such as sub-Saharan Africa as weakly mobile, it is true that most migration in this region is regional and that migration to industrialised countries is relatively weak (Bakewell & de Haas 2007). It seems not to be coincidental that the world’s major labour emigration countries in relative-to-population terms (e.g., Mexico, Morocco, Turkey, Philippines) are typically upper-lower to middle income countries,

### 3.2. The migration hump

What has remained unobserved so far is that migration economists have – apparently unintentionally – provided additional economic evidence for and further refinement of the transitional migration perspective by uncovering the anatomy of the “migration hump”. Martin (1993) and Martin and Taylor (1996) argued that a temporary increase in migration – a migration hump – has been a usual part of the process of economic development. In the early stages of development, an increase in wealth tends to lead to a rise in migration, since a certain threshold of wealth is necessary to enable people to assume the costs and risks of migrating. With increasing wealth and the establishment of migrant networks, an increasing proportion of the population is able to migrate, selectivity of migration tends to decrease, and this process of “development” initially tends to lead to an increasing diffusion of migration across communities.

Only at later stages of development, does emigration tend to decrease and do regions and countries tend to transform from net labour exporters to net labour importers (cf. Bohning 1994:196; Martin 1992:471; Martin & Taylor 1996; Olesen 2002:141; Rotte et al 1997)<sup>6</sup>. This has happened in recent decades with countries as diverse as Spain, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Malaysia, Taiwan and South Korea, which used to be located on global “labour frontiers”, which have shifted further on since then.

Economic development and decreasing income differentials with destination countries therefore tend to have a J-curve or inverted U-curve effect on emigration, steeply increasing in the initial phases of economic development and only later gradually decreasing (Martin & Taylor 1996). This “migration hump” seems to reflect rather adequately past (Massey 1991) and contemporary (Olesen 2002:141) global migration patterns and shows a striking degree of correspondence with Zelinsky’s and Skeldon’s models. In many ways, Zelinsky’s model can be seen as a migration hump *avant la lettre*. This appears to be another ground for rejecting relativist claims that no general inferences whatsoever can be made about the historical, spatio-temporal evolution of migration in direct or indirect relation to broader development processes. In fact, Zelinsky’s, Skeldon’s and Martin and Taylor’s approaches can be integrated into one single, spatio-temporal ‘transitional’ migration perspective, which recognises the complex, non-linear interlinkages between the occurrence of various forms of migration and general social, technological, economic and demographic transformation processes embodied in the term “development”.

Thus, it is possible to incorporate the criticism on Zelinsky’s original theoretical perspective without rejecting it but by modifying it, provided that some conditions are met (De Haas 2007a). First, such a modified model should allow for historical-regional, time-spatial variations viewed as a variety of patterns within a general system. Second, a realistic ‘transitional’ perspective on migration should perceive the relation between development and the occurrence of specific types of migration as an indirect and probabilistic rather than as a direct and deterministic one. Moreover, this relation is not unidirectional, because a *decreasing* relative development level may also transform an immigration country into an emigration country. In the end, it is the level of development *relative* to other places and countries that determines migration propensities. As we will see, this fits into the idea (particularly advanced by the new

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<sup>6</sup> Prior research seems to have indicated that emigration tends to decrease significantly if the income differential between sending and receiving countries reaches values between 1:3 and 1:4.5, provided that the emigration country is growing fast (Martin 1994; Faini and Venturini 1994; Olesen 2002).

economics of labour migration) that relative, not absolute, deprivation is one of the main determinants of migration.

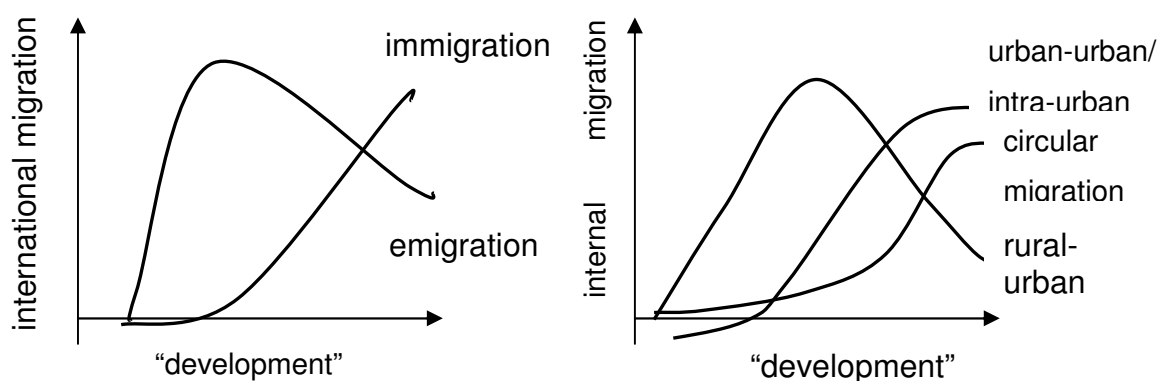
Third, a final necessary modification to this transitional migration perspective seems to broaden our view of ‘development’ beyond a narrow focus on economic and demographic variables. The migration-development nexus also comprises important social and cultural dimensions. Besides rising incomes and improved transportation and communication infrastructure, also factors like education and access to information and social capital initially tend to increase people’s aspirations and abilities to migrate (De Haas 2005).

Therefore, it is necessary to conceive ‘development’ as the more general increase of people’s capabilities. Such a more comprehensive approach to development is offered by Amartya Sen (1999), who conceives development as “the process of expanding the substantive freedoms that people enjoy”. In order to operationalize these ‘freedoms’, he applies the concept of human capability, which relates to the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have – including the option to migrate as a strategy to achieve livelihood improvements. Sen’s capabilities approach contrasts with narrower views of development that are largely restricted to income indicators.

To summarise, the fundamental idea is that socio-economic development tends to increase people’s capabilities and aspirations to migrate. However, while the effect of development on capabilities to migrate is more or less linear, the effect on people’s aspirations to migrate is more likely to resemble a J or inverted U-curve as a consequence of decreasing levels of relative deprivation.

Figure 1 depicts how, according to transitional models, “development” and different forms of migration are supposed to be *generally* related to each other. Within an integrated transitional migration perspective, ‘development’ in its broader sense is initially likely to increase people’s propensity to migrate, first predominantly internally and in later development stages increasingly internationally. On the longer run, decreasing spatial (internal and international) opportunity gaps might decrease people’s incentives to migrate, which is likely to result in a slow-down in both rural-to-urban and international out-migration but, most importantly, in an increasing diversification of migration patterns, along with increasing importance of immigration, rather than a decrease in mobility as such.

**Figure 1. The general effect of development on migration patterns according to transitional models**



Source: Adapted from Zelinsky (1971:233), see also Martin and Taylor (1996)

Certainly, there is a danger in explaining migration by singling out factors such as demographic and economic development. After all, countries with roughly the same population growth rates and levels of development tend to show highly diverging migration characteristics. To what extent migration will occur, and where migrants will go, depends on the interplay between many variables (cf. Russell 1995), such as geographical distance, historical political and cultural links, past and present immigration policies, income, unemployment, leisure, education, the nature of political regimes, safety, environmental factors, access to information, social capital (among which access to migrant networks), and so on. Jointly, they determine the general level and distribution of wealth and other opportunities (cf. freedom of expression, employment, education), people's perceptions of "here" and "there", and, by that, the propensity and capability of people to migrate. Although countries or regions resembling Zelinsky's categories (b) and (c) seem to have a higher *propensity* to experience high international out-migration, the extent to which this occurs seems to vary greatly within a possibilistic range.

The added value of transitional models is their capacity to link the occurrence of specific forms of migration to broader processes of social and economic development into one spatio-temporal perspective. This offers insight into the complex and dynamic links between migration and development, and tackles *idées reçues* such as "poverty breeds migration". However, transitional models concentrate on the changing spatio-temporal morphology of migration, and almost uniquely interpret changing migration patterns as a result of broader development processes. They thereby ignore the reciprocal effects of migration on development processes both at the destination and origin.

As has been argued, it is this very inability to integrate both causes and effects of migration within a broader theoretical perspective on development that has haunted much migration research so far. As a constituent component of broader development processes, migration is to be simultaneously considered as both a dependent and independent variable. In order to do sufficient justice to the latter observation, the remainder of this paper will examine the main theoretical perspectives that have been developed on the various feedback mechanisms through which migration patterns are both modified and perpetuated over time, and the controversial issue of how migration affects development in migrants-sending societies. Subsequently, we will attempt to integrate both sets of theories within one single perspective on migration and development.

## 4. Internal dynamics and feedbacks: networks and migration systems

### 4.1. Social capital, chain migration and network theory

Labour migration may begin for a variety of reasons. Although the truism holds that economic forces often play an important role as one of the root causes of migration, and people tend to move to places where the standards of living are better, this alone cannot explain the actual shape of migration patterns (Salt 1987:243; Schoorl 1998). This draws our attention to the role of nation states, geographical proximity, institutions, social networks, and cultural and historical factors in creating new migration patterns.

Once a certain critical number of migrants have settled at the destination, however, other forces come into play. The often coincidental choices made by pioneer migrants or labour-recruiting employers tend to have a great influence on subsequent migration patterns. There is Lee's (1966:54-55) argument that migration facilitates the flow of information back from the place of destination to the origin, which facilitates the passage for later migrants. Moreover, there is evidence that the already settled migrants function as "bridgeheads" (Böcker 1994), reducing the risks as well as material and psychological costs of subsequent migration. Through the assistance of friends and relatives, new migrants may more easily be able to obtain information and receive active assistance in finding employment and a place to live, in arranging residence papers, or in finding a marriage partner. Therefore, the formation of an established migrant community at one particular destination will increase the likelihood of subsequent migration to that particular place (Appleyard 1992).

In more recent studies, the term *network migration* has usually been used to describe this process of what used to be described as ‘chain migration’. Networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey et al 1993:448). These social bonds and the feeling of being part of one (transnational) community also explain why migrants tend to remit substantial amounts of money to nonmigrants—whereas neo-classical, individual-centred approaches towards migration leave no room for remittances (Djajic 1986; Taylor 1999). The often transnational character migrants’ identities largely explain why bonds with communities of origin are often maintained over the generations and why settlement and integration at the destination does not automatically coincide with declining propensities to remit or to remain involved in different ways with the society of origin.

Massey (1989) argued that once the number of network connections in an origin area reaches a critical level, migration becomes self-perpetuating, because it creates the social structure to sustain the process (cf. Appleyard 1992). Network effects explain the (often unintended) perpetuation of migration, often over formally closed borders, irrespective of its original causes (Waldorf 1998). The facilitating role of such “family and friends networks” makes migration notoriously difficult for governments to control. Network connections are a form of social capital that people draw upon to gain access to employment abroad (Massey et al 1993:448). Besides material and human capital (education, skills, knowledge), social capital is a third, crucial migration resource in (1) enabling and (2) inspiring people to migrate.

At the receiving end, social capital in the form of migrated kin has a countervailing effect on legal, political, and financial obstacles to immigration. At the sending end, the implication of falling costs and risks is that migration, *ceteris paribus*, tends to become less selective—with regards to access of migrants to human and material capital—over time. Consequently, an increasing share of the population can afford to migrate (Taylor 1986). This diffusionist notion is in line with and can be largely integrated into the transitional migration model elaborated in the previous section. As we will see, changes in migrant selectivity are also likely to influence the development impact of migration at the sending end.

The study of migration networks has become popular in the past two decades, but there is a tendency to accept the arguments of network theories too uncritically. Their weak point is that they do not offer insight into the mechanisms that eventually lead to the weakening and crumbling of networks and migration systems. Following the circular logic of these theories, migration seems to go on *ad infinitum* (Massey et al 1998:48). They do not indicate what are



the external, structural factors as well as internal processes that counteract the tendencies that lead to increasing migration through networks (Klaver 1997:45).

As with the push-pull models, there is a certain tendency to empirically illustrate the important facilitating role of migrant networks without specifying their relative weight vis-à-vis other facilitating and constraining factors affecting migration. Much empirical research on migrant network tend to consist of case studies that tend to sample on the dependent (network) variable and are therefore potentially biased towards instances where such networks do play their ascribed migration facilitating and diffusionist role. First, on the longer term labour migration movements do often tend to decrease or cease when the fundamental causes of migration disappear. Second, although migration is indeed difficult to control by government due to network effects, legal and physical barriers to migration can have an important influence on the magnitude and nature of migration, although not necessarily in the intended direction.

Third, there may also be internal forces, which may weaken networks over time. Migrants are not necessarily only “bridgeheads” facilitating subsequent migration, but may also become restrictive “gatekeepers” (Böcker 1994; De Haas 2003), being hesitant or unwilling to assist prospective migrants. Links with nonmigrant kin and friends might weaken over time. An important inference from network theory was that migration selectivity tends to decrease after the initial stages of pioneer migration, leading to a kind of diffusion of the migration experience over communities. However, the lesson here is that selectivity might increase again when migrant networks weaken. Furthermore, although kinship networks are of great help in migrating, they also tend to be exclusionary for people not belonging to particular social or kinship groups, in particular in the context of restrictive immigration policies (De Haas 2003). This points to the “downside of social capital”, put forward by Portes and Landolt (1996). One migration-relevant “downside” of social capital is that “the same strong ties that help members of a group often enable to exclude outsiders” (Portes & Landolt 1996:3).

#### 4.2. Migration systems theory

Network theory is closely affiliated to another approach known as migration systems theory. The fundamental assumption of this theory is that migration alters the social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions at both the sending and receiving ends—that is, the entire developmental space within which migration processes operate. Whereas network theory

mainly focuses on the vital role of personal relations between migrants and nonmigrants, and the way this social capital facilitates, perpetuates and transforms migration processes, migration systems theory goes beyond this point in stressing that migration not only affects and is affected by the direct social environment of migrants, but restructures the entire societal – or “developmental” – context of the concrete spaces in which migration takes place, both at the receiving and sending end. Unlike transitional models that focus on how broader processes of development affects migration, migration systems theory draws a two-way, *reciprocal* and *dynamic* link between migration and development, and therefore seems particularly relevant for elaborating a theoretical framework, which puts migration in a broader development perspective.

The geographer Mabogunje (1970), the founder of migration systems theory, defined a migration system as a set of places linked by flows and counterflows of people, goods, services, and information, which tend to facilitate further exchange, including migration, between the places. Borrowing from general systems theory, he focused on the role of information flows and feedback mechanisms in shaping migration systems. He stressed the importance of feedback mechanisms, through which information about the migrants’ reception and progress at the destination is transmitted back to the place of origin. Favourable information would then encourage further migration and lead to situations of

almost organized migratory flows from particular villages to particular cities. In other words, the existence of information in the system encourages greater deviation from the “most probable or random state . . . . [The] state of a system at any given time is not determined so much by its initial conditions as by the nature of the process, or the system parameters . . . . since open systems are basically independent of their initial conditions. (Mabogunje 1970:13-4)

Mabogunje focused his analysis on rural-urban migration within the African continent. Portes and Böröcz (1987) and Kritz *et al.* (1992) extended this to international migration. International migration systems consist of countries—or rather places within different countries—that exchange relatively large numbers of migrants, and are also characterized by feedback mechanisms that connect the movement of people between particular countries, areas, and even cities to the concomitant flows of goods, capital (remittances), ideas, and information (Fawcett 1989; Gurak & Caces 1992). Migration systems link people, families, and communities over space in what we nowadays would refer to as transnational communities (cf. Vertovec 1999). This results in a rather neat geographical structuring and clustering of migration flows, which is far from a random state, in which

formal and informal subsystems operate to perpetuate and reinforce the systematic nature of international flows by encouraging migration along certain pathways, and

discouraging it along others. The end result is a set of relatively stable exchanges . . . yielding an identifiable geographical structure that persists across space and time. (Mabogunje 1970:12)

Network theory can already explain why, once a migration system has developed, it tends to operate relatively independently of government policy intervention. Migration system theory adds to that, in line with Lee (1966), that migration flows—and counterflows of goods, remittances, ideas, and information—tend to be geographically structured (patterned) and take the shape of spatially clustered flows. This clustered morphology of migration flows can typically not be explained by factors such as unemployment as well as income and other opportunity differentials. In emigration countries, we often see that particular regions, villages, or ethnic (sub) groups tend to specialize in migration to particular areas, cities, or even city quarters, either within the same country or abroad.

Besides the existence of very specialized migration systems at the micro-level, it is possible to identify several international migration systems at the macro-global level, in which particular regions in the developing world have specialized in migration to particular regions in the developed world. Examples are the North American migration system which links Mexico and central American countries to the US and Canada and Euro-Mediterranean migration system, which links North African countries and Turkey to the European Union (De Haas 2007b; Kritz et al 1992). There are clear parallels between migration system theory, world system theory and Skeldon's regionalisation of global development tiers, as they all draw on the notion of migration connecting semi-peripheral 'migration frontier' countries (Skeldon 1997) to wealthy 'core countries'. Fawcett (1989) stressed the relevance of both national and transnational networks, which tend to be closely interwoven, blurring the distinction between internal and international migration (Martin 1992:458; McKee & Tisdell 1988:418). Via a process of so-called *leapfrogging*, international migration is often preceded by internal migrant moves, and returning migrants may settle in other than their places of origin. In a process called *relay migration* (Arizpe 1981), return migration may be followed by the migration of another family member.

The fact that the initial circumstances at both the receiving and sending end are modified by the migration process implies that the causes and consequences of migration should not be studied separately, but as part of the same system and processes. Migration simultaneously reshapes the socio-economic "development" context at both the origin and destination, which in their turn, are likely to influence subsequent migration patterns. For example, remittances sent back to family members could alter the social and economic context in the areas of origin and encourage subsequent migration (van Dalen et al 2005). Levitt (1998) stressed the

importance of “social remittances”, which she interprets as a local-level, migration-driven form of cultural diffusion. This flow back consisting of ideas, behaviours, and identities not only plays an important role in potentially promoting immigrant entrepreneurship, family formation, and political integration. It also affects the perceptions, feelings of relative deprivation and aspirations of people, which are also likely to affect subsequent migration patterns. The influx of international remittances to migrant households can increase intra-community inequality and feelings of relative deprivation among nonmigrants and may contribute to a ‘culture of migration’, in which migrating becomes the norm. As Massey (1990:4-5) pointed out, migration induces changes in social and economic structures that make additional migration likely.

This insight into the reciprocal effects of migration on the entire development context emphasizes the importance of including *nonmigrants* in any migration impact analysis, as migration tends to affect sending societies *as a whole*. The methodological implication of this seems to be that the effects of migration cannot be properly understood by studying migrants alone, as is often the case, but also requires considering the wider (development) context in which migration takes place. Therefore, the very weakness of many studies on causes (determinants) and effects (impact) of migration is their tendency to focus on migrants and migration. Also in the study of transnationalism, most empirical evidence is based on case studies, which tend to sample on the dependent (transnationalism) variable and are therefore likely to be biased towards immigrants with high levels of transnational orientations (Guarnizo et al 2003). A proper understanding of the interlinkages and feedback mechanisms between migration and development necessitates studying entire migrant communities, including nonmigrants as well as the concrete regional and local contexts and transnational spaces in which they live.

Network and migration systems theories primarily focus on the factors that cause, shape, and perpetuate migration. In particular migration systems theory is useful in describing and modelling processes of spatial geographical structuring of migration patterns, and, as a spatio-temporal model, it can be well integrated within the dynamic *transitional* models of migration-development interconnections which we elaborated on the basis of Zelinsky’s and Skeldon’s work. Taken together, they help us to understand how migration evolves over time—and changes in its nature, magnitude, destinations, and selectivity—and is reciprocally linked to the broader process of development. This theoretical perspective is fundamentally conflicting with and superior to static and a-historical push-pull, neo-classical and structuralist approaches, which all draw on the – erroneous – sedentary notion that migration and development are substitutes rather than complements.

## 5. Migration and development optimists vs. pessimists

Because of their very focus on migration processes, most migration theories do not offer very *specific* insights into the nature of migration impacts on development in sending societies, let alone the heterogeneity of such impacts. Over the past four decades, the impact of migration on development in migrant sending communities and countries has been the subject of continuous and sometimes heated debate. In this debate, one can broadly distinguish two radically opposed approaches, that is, the “balanced growth” versus “asymmetric development” theories. Alternatively, one might call them “migration optimists” and “migration pessimists” (cf. Taylor 1999). However, this debate has evolved rather separately from the theoretical debate on the causes of migration. This explains why the debate on migration and development has remained somehow undertheorised and largely disconnected from more general debates.

Table 2 summarises the opposed views of these two schools of thought on migration and development, as well as the more general strands of social theory within which they should be situated. The migration optimists are largely inspired by neo-classical migration economy and developmentalist modernization theories, which are all affiliated to the functionalist paradigm in social theory. Notwithstanding differences between neo-classical and developmentalist views, they both believe that migration has generally had a positive impact on the development process in sending societies. Whereas in a strictly neo-classical world, the developmental role of migration is entirely realized through factor price equalization, common developmentalist views (which have long predominated post-WWII development policies) expect migration to generate counterflows of capital (remittances and investment) and knowledge, which can be invested and are believed to subsequently stimulate development and modernization. In particular return migrants are seen as active agents of economic growth. Most migration pessimists draw on structuralist social theory, which encompasses neo-Marxist, dependency, world systems, and, at least to a certain extent, cumulative causation theory. In general, structuralist approaches towards migration and development tend to address migration as a negative phenomenon contributing to the further *underdevelopment* of sending societies.

**Table 2. Opposing views on migration and development**

Migration optimists		Migration pessimists
Functionalist	↔	Structuralist
Neo-classical	↔	Neo-Marxist
Modernisation	↔	Disintegration
Net North-South transfer	↔	Net South-North transfer
Brain gain	↔	Brain drain
More equality	↔	More inequality
Remittance investment	↔	Consumption
Development	↔	Dependency
Less migration	↔	More migration

This section will further demonstrate how the pessimistic and optimistic approaches towards migration and development fit into the neoclassical (balanced growth and equilibrium) and historical-structural (asymmetric growth) strands of migration and social theory, respectively. It will subsequently evaluate their severe limitations and show how more pluralist approaches have evolved as of the 1980s which offer a more subtle, less deterministic way of thinking about migration-development interactions.

### 5.1. The dawning of a new era: developmentalist views

Neo-classical advocates of the theoretical model of balanced growth perceive migration as a form of optimal allocation of production factors to the benefit of all, that is, both sending and receiving areas. In this perspective, the re-allocation of labour from rural, agricultural areas to urban, industrial sectors, is considered as an essential prerequisite for economic growth and, hence, as an constituent component of the entire development process (Todaro 1969:139). The free movement of labour—in an unconstrained market environment—is eventually ex-

pected to lead to the increasing scarcity of labour, which will then lead to a higher marginal productivity of labour and increasing wage levels in migrant sending areas. Capital flows are expected to go in exactly the opposite direction as labour migration, that is, from the labour-scarce to the capital scarce migrant sending areas.

Eventually, this process of factor price equalization will lead to migration ceasing once wage levels at the origin and destination converge. As Djajic (1986) pointed out, earlier neo-classical approaches did rule out the possibility of a gain for nonmigrants, as they did not consider remittances in their models. Their only gain is that the scarcity—reflected in the price—of labour at the origin theoretically increases as a result of migration<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, strictly speaking, neo-classical migration theory has no place for income remittances from migrants to the areas of origin (Taylor 1999:65). It tends to view migrants as atomistic, income maximizing individuals, and disregard their belonging to social groups such as households, families and communities. If that were true, there would indeed be no reason to remit money. In a strictly neo-classical world, the developmental role of migration is entirely realized through factor price equalization.

This rather abstract model gives no realistic insight into the concrete impacts of migration on the sending societies. Nevertheless, scholars and politicians advocating migration as development tool for societies of origin have generally recognized the importance of remittances, to which they attribute an important role in stimulating local, regional, and national economic growth. According to “developmentalist” views dominating development policies in the 1950s and 1960s, migrants, and in particular return migrants, were seen as important agents of change and innovation, investing remittances in economic enterprises back home. It was also hypothesized that migrants not only bring back money, but also new ideas, knowledge, and entrepreneurial attitudes that they have acquired as a result of migration. In this way, migrants would contribute to the accelerated spatial diffusion of modernization in relatively “backward” areas, and play a mentally and financially positive role in development.

Such visions should be partly associated with the optimistic expectations surrounding the development of poor countries that were prominent in the first 25 years of the post-WWII era. Optimistic views on migration and development were generally rooted in nineteenth and early twentieth century studies on rural-to-urban migration within Europe and the United States

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<sup>7</sup> As we will see, historical-structuralist models paid just as little attention to reverse resource flows like remittances as neo-classical models.

and based on the historical experience with emigration from Europe to the United States, Canada, Australia, and so on. Freshly decolonized countries, it was believed, would quickly follow the same path of modernization, industrialization, and rapid economic growth as other, mostly Western countries had gone through or were—for instance in the case of southern Europe—still going through. Reflecting these expectations, such countries were optimistically called “developing countries”. Capital constraints seemed the major problem developing countries were facing. The optimistic developmentalist model postulated that through a policy of large-scale capital transfer (loans, development aid, and—indeed—remittances) and industrialization, poor countries would be able to jump on the bandwagon of rapid economic development and modernization. Labour migration was seen an integral part of this modernisation process.

In the same post-war period, large-scale labour migration from “developing” to “developed” countries started to gain momentum. As Papademetriou (1985:212) argued, many labour surplus countries became involved in the migration process amidst expectations of the “dawning of a new era”. Governments of developing countries started to actively encourage emigration, since they considered it one of the principal instruments to promote development (Adler 1981; Heinemeijer et al 1977; Penninx 1982).

At the macro level, remittances were considered a vital source of hard currency. At the meso and micro level, migration was supposed to lead to the economic improvement of migrants and greater freedom from local socio-economic barriers and constraints. Remittances would “improve income distribution and quality of life beyond what other available development approaches could deliver” (Keely and Tran 1989:500). Moreover, it was expected that labour migrants, who were generally assumed to return after some years, would re-invest large sums of money in industrial enterprises in the region or country of origin. Expectations ran high. As Beijer (1970:102) voiced this development optimism, migrant workers “can also represent a hope for the industrial development of their native land”. In the same vein, Kindleberger (1965:253) argued that “large-scale emigration can contribute to the best of both worlds: rapid growth in the country of immigration . . . and rapid growth in the country of origin”.

Although such development optimism has been tempered and subsequently reversed since the early 1970s, some governments have continued to see international migration as a major instrument of national economic development. This particularly applies to the Asian and Pacific context, where this has also been referred to as the “MIRAB” model (Bertram 1999; Bertram 1986). This can be seen as a national development model, in which a combination of “migration, remittances, aid, and (government) bureaucracy” is expected to contribute to the



economic take-off of developing countries (Hayes 1991; McKee & Tisdell 1988:418). Many emigration countries have developed specific policies to maximize the amounts of remittances sent back and to stimulate investments by migrants (Ghosh 1992).

## 5.2. The migrant syndrome: cumulative causation and structuralist views

As from the late 1960s, the optimistic views on migration and development were increasingly challenged under the combined influence of a paradigm shift in social sciences and development theory towards historical-structuralist views and an increasing number of empirical studies and policy experiences (such as in Mediterranean countries) that often did not support optimistic views on migration and development. In historical-structuralist views, migration clearly failed to resolve, or substantially ameliorate, the structural conditions that were believed to cause migration (Papademetriou 1985:211). In a historical-structuralist perspective, migration is essentially interpreted as a negative “flight from misery” which contributes little to development. Worse, many migration researchers have argued that migration has even contributed to aggravating problems of underdevelopment. In sending countries, migration would contribute to

the evolution into an uncontrolled depletion of their already meagre supplies of skilled manpower - and the most healthy, dynamic, and productive members of their populations (Papademetriou 1985:111-112).

At the national level, the importance of remittances as a source of foreign currency has been generally recognized, but there was increasing concern about the brain drain phenomenon. Although many governments of developing countries have been comparatively positive towards the emigration of their lower educated citizens, the attitude towards the emigration of highly skilled people has generally been more negative. The “brain drain” has been commonly perceived as detrimental to development, as it is perceived to deprive poor countries of their valuable skilled and professional labour resources in which states have invested many years of education (Adams 1969; Baldwin 1970).

Whereas at the national level the feelings were mixed, the disappointment seemed particularly high concerning the effects of migration on development at the regional and local level. The dominant vision was that, although remittances were sent back, they were rarely invested in such a way that they could contribute to development in the regions and communities of origin. This coincided with the renaissance in historical-structuralist Marxist thinking in social sciences and dependency thinking in development theory and practice (Frank 1966b;

Frank 1969). Historical structuralist and related centre-periphery theories seemed applicable to the study of migration and did not bode well (De Mas & Vermeulen 1993). In fact, these approaches turned the argument of neo-classical and developmentalist approaches upside down: migration does not decrease, but increase spatial and inter-personal disparities in developmental levels. Also in a socio-cultural respect, the effects of migration were increasingly seen as detrimental, as they would provoke consumerist, non-productive and remittance-dependent attitudes of nonmigrants. From the early 1970s, numerous academic publications have supported the hypothesis that migration contributes to the “development of underdevelopment” instead of the reverse (Almeida 1973; Binford 2003; Lipton 1980; Reichert 1981; Rhoades 1979; Rubenstein 1992).

Such pessimistic findings seemed to fit particularly well into one particular, more general theoretical perspective on development, that is, cumulative causation theory, which was developed earlier by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal (1957). While being a general perspective on the concentration of economic activities, cumulative causation has been frequently applied to the issue of migration and development<sup>8</sup>. Cumulative causation theory postulates that once differential growth had occurred, internal and external economies of scale will perpetuate and deepen the bipolar pattern characterized by the vicious cycle of poverty in the periphery and the accelerated growth of the core region. Although positive “spread effects” also occur—such as increased demand for agricultural products and raw materials trade from the periphery and, though not explicitly mentioned by Myrdal, remittances—these would in no way match the negative “backwash effects”. Myrdal argued that, without strong state policy, the capitalist system fosters increasing regional inequalities (cf. Potter et al 1999:56). Cumulative causation theory is analogous to migration systems theory (Mabogunje 1970) in the sense that, when applied to migration, it links the process of migration to the dynamics in the broader development context in both the origin and destination. The main difference is that cumulative causation theory is more explicit on the developmental impact of migration on sending societies, and its verdict is clearly negative.

Cumulative causation theory holds that capitalist development is inevitably marked by deepening spatial and personal income and welfare inequalities. By altering the context in which subsequent migration decisions are made, the establishment of migration streams creates de-developing feedback mechanisms—the backwash effects—in sending societies and re-

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<sup>8</sup> This should be distinguished from the way in which Massey (1990) has employed the term cumulative causation to explain why the social and economic effects of migration make additional migration likely.

gions that make additional movements more likely. Cumulative causation theory suggests that migration sets in motion a vicious circle in which the backwash effects alter the system in such a way that productivity and wealth at the origin is further decreased. Migration, it suggests, undermines regional and local economies by depriving communities of their most valuable labour force, increasing dependence on the outside world, and stimulating subsequent out-migration. In sum, migration is believed to intensify regional developmental disparities. Although cumulative causation theory was developed well before the renaissance of Marxist social theory, it seems to fit well in a historical-structural and dependency framework of asymmetrical growth, and was taken up again with enthusiasm in the 1970s.

Structuralist and cumulative causation theories perceive migration as a process serving the interests of the receiving nations in need of cheap immigrant labour, and which only seems to worsen underdevelopment at the sending end. This pauperization, they assume, encourages further out-migration. The latter thought reveals an *a priori* perception of migration as the more or less linear result of increasing spatial opportunity disparities, underdevelopment and poverty. Increasing development and opportunity disparities are therefore believed to further increase migration.

Radically different from neo-classical and developmentalist interpretations, cumulative causation and historical structuralist theories do not see migration as a means to development. On the contrary, they argue that migration deprives developing countries of their valuable human and material capital resources, which are exploited for the benefit of industrialized countries (international migration) and urban-based capitalist elite groups within developing countries (internal migration). The productive structures at the origin would be progressively undermined, contributing to “asymmetric growth”—as opposed to the neo-classical equilibrium model of factor price equalization—and the increasing underdevelopment and dependency of the underdeveloped on the “exploitative” developed core countries (cf. Almeida 1973).

An increasing number of empirical studies conducted in migrant sending areas suggested that Myrdal’s rather grim predictions of cumulative causation appeared to be coming true (for review articles, see Lewis 1986; Lipton 1980). Dependency, instability, and developmental distortion were resulting in economic decline (Keely & Tran 1989:501). Empirical work revealed various other negative effects of migration, in particular in the socio-cultural domain. Such negative perspectives on the role of migration were amalgamated into what might be

called the “migrant syndrome”<sup>9</sup> view, which tends to see migration as a process draining developing countries in general and backward rural areas in particular of their labour and human capital resources.

Although the brain drain has attracted most attention, perhaps more relevant in the context of much lower skilled labour migration from developing countries would seem to be the “brawn drain” (Penninx 1982:793)—the massive departure of young, able-bodied men and women from rural areas (Lewis 1986). This *lost labour effect* is supposed to have a negative effect on local production. Migration is therefore typically blamed for causing a critical shortage of agricultural labour (Taylor 1984) and the de-intensification of agriculture and the decline of land under cultivation (Rubenstein 1992:133). Moreover, migrants are typically young men that are often supposed to be the most significant agricultural innovators (Lipton 1980:7+11). Likewise, other traditional economic sectors, such as craft industries, are supposed to suffer from this lost labour effect.

The second mechanism through which migration is believed to have a detrimental effect on development in migrant sending areas is *increasing inequality* at the community and regional level. This is related to the selective nature of migration: almost all empirical studies confirm that migrants are not representative of the communities from which they originate. In contrast to popular perceptions, it tends not to be the poorest and most miserable who leave because a certain threshold of wealth is required to overcome the costs and risks involved in migrating.

To argue from “poor villages expel more migrants” to “poor villagers are likeliest to migrate” is to commit a classical “ecological fallacy”, and in practice it is seldom the poorest who migrate, still less migrate successfully (Lipton 1980:7). It has also been argued that migrants tend to be the already employed, more entrepreneurial, open-minded, and relatively better educated people (Zachariah et al 2001). As it is already the better-off who tend to migrate, socio-economic inequalities within communities will increase, since the remittances and other benefits of migration thus go disproportionately to the better-off (Lipton 1980). Therefore, migration will not contribute to the alleviation of the poverty of the worst-off. Instead, the gradual undermining of traditional economies would even increase the deprivation of nonmigrants.

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<sup>9</sup> To be attributed to Reichert (1981, cited in Taylor 1999:64).

Perhaps the mostly commonly cited “truth” in much empirical research on migration and development is that migrants fritter their money away on “conspicuous consumption”<sup>10</sup> such as imported consumer goods, and on so-called non-productive enterprises such as housing (Entzinger 1985:268; Lewis 1986). In his seminal “pessimistic” review of migration impact-studies, Lipton (1980:12) concluded that recipients use remittances first to pay off debts incurred in financing migration or for education of their children. According to Lipton, more than 90 percent of remittances are spent on everyday consumption. Most consumption behaviour serves to reinforce status, such as high payments for bride prices, feasts, funerals and the construction of pompous, luxurious houses. Much “chain migration” depends on education financed by remittances from older siblings. Investments only come in the fourth place of remittance use. Moreover, these would mainly be so-called *consumptive investments*, mainly concerning a capital transfer more than capital creation, such as the purchase of land, or remittances were used to hire workers (e.g., for irrigation maintenance) where once family labour was used, or for labour-replacing mechanization rather than the generation of extra output or the better use of scarce land inputs (for largely similar voices, see for instance Lewis 1986; Rubenstein 1992; Zachariah et al 2001).

Skepticism about the use of migrant remittances for productive investments has been the common thread of many migration and development studies. Other studies mention a lack of creativity and innovation of most investors, which would result in an imitative “me-too” effect, which would render the establishment of, for instance, grocery shops, small restaurants, and trucks, “second rank propositions in an overcrowded sector” (Penninx 1982:802-803). Such expenses tend to be evaluated as not contributing to development, weakening the local economy, and increasing dependency on the outside world. First, increased consumption and land purchase by migrants were reported to provoke *inflationary pressures* (cf. Russell 1992) and soaring land prices (Appleyard 1989; Rubenstein 1992), from which the already poorer nonmigrants would suffer most—leading to more inequality. Second, many purchased items (e.g., TV sets, household appliances, refrigerators, stylish clothing and fabrics, building materials, ornaments, “modern” foodstuffs, fertilizers, etc.) would not be locally produced, but have to be imported from urban areas or from abroad. This is assumed to have the double effect of “crowding out” traditional, local production, and strengthening the economies of “core areas”, thereby intensifying the process of “asymmetric growth” and increasing regional

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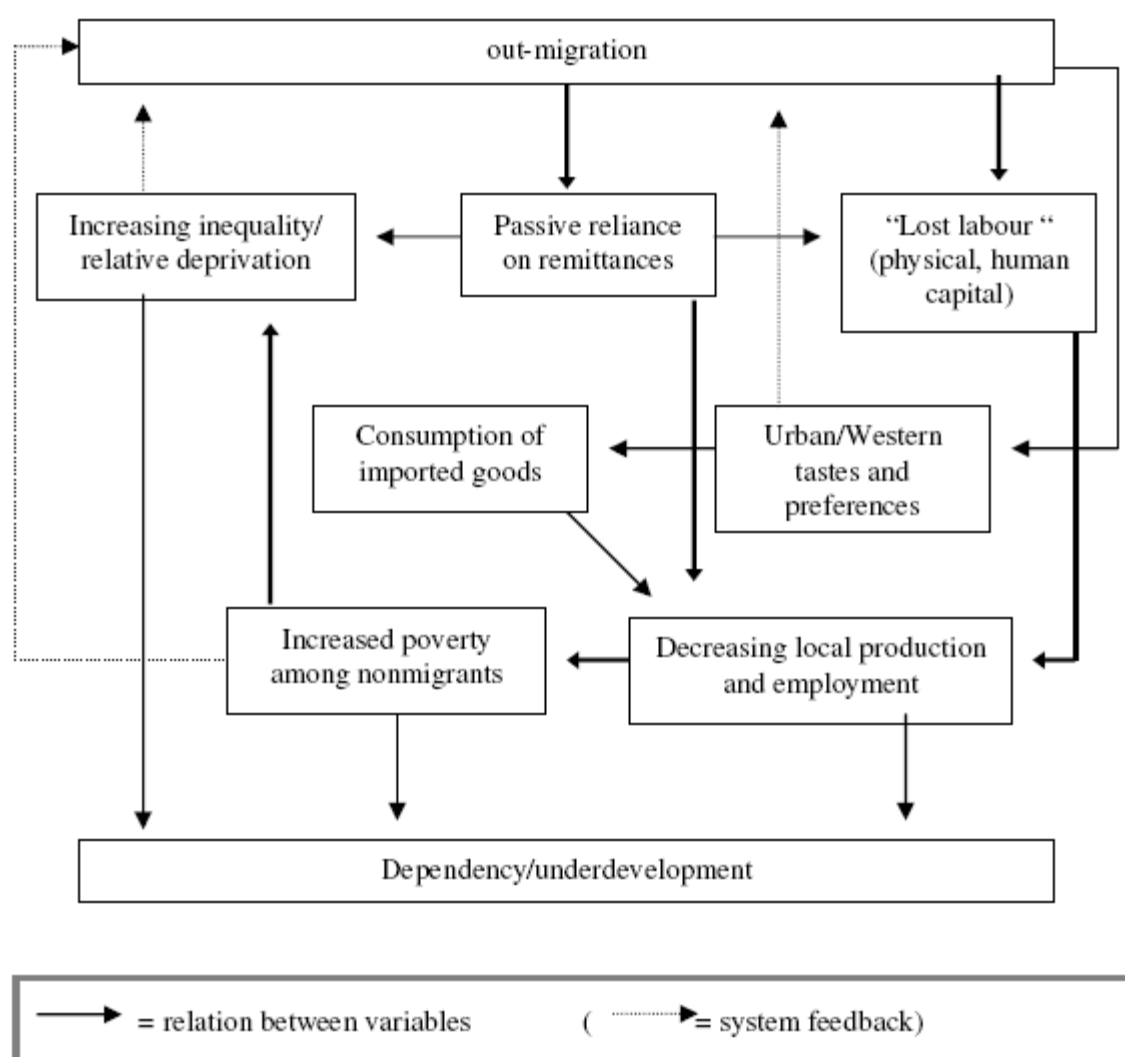
<sup>10</sup> This term was coined by Veblen (1970) to describe the way that the *nouveau riche* consumed particular items in order to denote their new social status. Veblen T. 1970. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: Unwin.

disparities between the core and periphery. Third, the scarce productive investments would be mainly made in urban areas outside the village or region of origin (Lewis 1986; Lipton 1980). This *leakage* of remittance investments out of migrant sending areas is supposed to further exacerbate regional disparities in wealth.

Besides the negative impact of migration on local production, poverty, and inequality, many researchers have also negatively evaluated the socio-cultural effects of migration. The exposure to the wealth of (return) migrants and the goods and ideas they bring with them, are often assumed to contribute to a change in rural tastes (Lipton 1980:12), which increases the demands for imported urban or foreign-produced goods and food, lowering the demand for locally produced goods and increasing the general costs of living for migrants and nonmigrants alike. Migration is held responsible for the loss of community solidarity or the undermining of their sociocultural integrity (Hayes 1991), and the breakdown of traditional institutions and organizations regulating village life and agriculture (De Haas 1998). The exposure of rural youth to the relative wealth and success of migrants, combined with changing “urban” tastes and material aspirations, is supposed to make the rural way of life less appealing, discourage local people from working in agricultural and other traditional sectors, and encourage even more out-migration. This, in combination with a negatively perceived “culture of migration”, would perpetuate the vicious circle of cumulative causation of the migrant syndrome.

Figure 2 displays the main mechanisms through which the “migration syndrome” is supposed to maintain and deepen underdevelopment in migrant sending societies. It shows how “migration pessimists” believe that these negative feedback effects lead to continuing out-migration. In Neomarxist terms, migration reproduces and reinforces the capitalist system based on inequality. The main positive effect of migration is the increase in family welfare for migrants themselves. However, this increase is assumed to be only temporary and therefore “artificial” or “cosmetic” (Lewis 1986). This one-sided dependency on migrant remittances is considered dangerous, based on the assumption that remittances will rapidly decrease after migrants have returned or have settled and start to integrate in receiving societies. According to the classical model of migrant integration, this would imply the gradual cutting of social ties with origin societies.

**Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the “migrant syndrome” (pessimistic perspectives)**



### 5.3. Towards a pluralist perspective

The presented views on migration and development represent two extremes. Most empirical work should be situated somewhere in between, although most studies have clearly tended towards the more pessimistic views at least until recently. The 1970s and 1980s were characterized by an expansion in the number of empirical micro-studies in various labour exporting countries, especially from Latin America (with an emphasis on Mexico) and, to a lesser extent, the Mediterranean (notably on Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia). Most of such micro-studies were carried out by anthropologists, sociologists, or geographers, and tended to support historical-structural views to varying degrees (cf. Almeida 1973; Park 1992; Reichert 1981; Rhoades 1979; Rubenstein 1992), while the number of publications more or less supporting the developmentalist view remained limited (cf. Baucic 1972;

Korner 1987; Rahman 2000; Yasin 1987). Even in the heyday of neo-Marxism, there have been empirical studies that stressed the non-uniform, differentiated impact of migration (Abadan-Unat et al 1976; Heinemeijer et al 1977; Penninx 1982). This partly reflected disciplinary divisions. Anthropologists and sociologists seemed the most pessimistic, while geographers and economists tended towards a more moderate stance (De Mas & Vermeulen 1993).

The stream of plainly pessimistic publications seemed to decrease towards the end of the 1980s, and the general tone of the scholarly debate has become more moderate since then. This timing seems not coincidental, as this has corresponded with a general paradigm shift in contemporary social theory, away from grand theories towards more pluralist, hybrid approaches. Most studies from the late 1980s and 1990s seem to have departed from a structuralist stance, and increasingly acknowledge the differentiated, non-deterministic nature of the migration impacts (cf. Adams 1991; Ahlburg 1995; Jones 1998; Keely & Tran 1989; McKee & Tisdell 1988).

However, the influence of pessimistic views on migration and development has long remained enormous, and many of its views – in particular on migrants' alleged inclination to waste money on conspicuous consumption – still pervade scholarly and, particularly, policy views on migration and development. Both explicitly and implicitly, many views derived from cumulative causation theory—which sees migration as a de-developing, destabilizing, and, hence, undesirable, product of poverty, as a *problem* which can and should be “solved” through closed border policies in combination with aid and development programs—still retain currency among academics, politicians, and the media.

Yet there are good theoretical arguments to reject the propositions of the migrant syndrome view. This criticism is not just based on another interpretation of empirical data due to a general paradigm shift in social theory away from structuralist thinking. There are also a number of theoretical fallacies and internal logical inconsistencies in the pessimistic views on migration and development derived from cumulative causation theory. The first objection is the deterministic and self-affirming nature of the model, which does not give room for heterogeneity in the specific, localized migration impacts. For what precise reasons would positive spread effects (e.g., remittances) never match negative backwash effects under certain conditions?

Second, like other “circular feedback” migration models—such as migration network theory—the vicious cycle of “pauperization” in the periphery and migration and growth at the core seems to go on *ad infinitum*. This is suspect, since it seems unrealistic to assume that there



are no counter-mechanisms which level-off or change the nature of this supposedly *linear* process over time. How far can “under-development” go on without decreasing migration? Cumulative causation and related models implicitly suppose a linear-negative association between development and migration. However, as has been argued earlier, one cannot generally assume a linear-positive relationship between spatial disparities in income and welfare and the occurrence of migration. As empirical evidence supporting transitional migration theories has convincingly demonstrated, the relationship between “development”—whether expressed in terms of the demographic and “vital” transition (Zelinsky 1971) or income and other opportunity disparities—and migration is J- or inverted U-curve like rather than linear and inversely proportional (Martin & Taylor 1996).

Third, there is an inherent logical contradiction in the two central arguments that migration pessimists generally make: On the one hand, they say, migration breeds inequality because migrants come from better-off groups within society. On the other hand, it is argued that further impoverishment of the region of origin leads to more migration. This is logically inconsistent, as the first argument correctly supposes that a certain threshold of wealth needs to precede migration and the second argument supposes a negative-linear relationship between wealth and migration. Thus, the migration pessimists tend to make an imprecise, inconsistent analysis of the causes of labour migration through their selective ignorance of the inherently selective character of migration. Therefore, they suggest that increasing deprivation *leads* to increased labour migration *per se*. However, this reflects an erroneous understanding of the role of migration in the development process, which is far more temporally and spatially heterogeneous than the migration pessimists suggest.

A fourth, empirical reason to question the one-sided negative perceptions on migration and development is the increasing body of empirical research that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s indicating that, under certain circumstances, migration has in fact played a positive role in the development of regions and countries of origin. In south-European countries such as Spain, Italy, and Greece and East Asian countries such as Malaysia and South-Korea, remittances have played a significant positive role in their—successful—national economic development and, in reaction to sustained socio-economic development in their countries of origin, many international migrants have in fact invested significantly in private enterprises.

After a long period of sustained development has out-migration levelled-off and decreased, and these formerly emigration countries have now been transformed into net immigration countries or are on the way to doing so. This again exemplifies that transitional migration theory – drawing on contributions by scholars such as Zelinsky (1971), Skeldon (1997) and Martin and Taylor (1996) – is more realistic and has more explanatory power than the largely

circular cumulative causation theory. Apparently, the self-reinforcing cyclical mechanisms of asymmetrical, polarizing development cannot be taken as axiomatic.

So, looking back, does this all mean that the migration optimists were right? Obviously, the answer is no. In fact, neither the structuralist pessimists nor the functionalist optimists were right, as the variation and complexity of real-life migration-development interactions is too high to be able to fit them into deterministic theoretical schemes predicting the development outcome of migration. Papademetriou and Martin (1991) already argued that there is no automatic mechanism by which international migration and remittances result in development. Few migration researchers would nowadays contest this general assertion (cf. Russell 1992), but it gives an uncomfortable feeling to leave it simply at that. The main challenge here is to elaborate an appropriate theoretical framework that is not deterministic and that is refined enough to deal with the heterogeneity and complexities of migration-development interactions, but that does not restrict itself to empiricism and “all is local and singular” relativism.

Findings from different studies are clearly contradictory. In some cases, migration seems to have a positive effect on the different dimensions of social and economic development, in other cases it seems to have no effect or even negative effects (De Haas 2007c). This not just pertains to differences in paradigmatic orientation—leading to different interpretations of similar empirical data—and research methodology, but also to real, existing differences. Empirical research has highlighted that the spiralling down mechanisms of cumulative causation do not always hold true, but that the perfect neo-classical world does not exist in reality either. Structural constraints such as highly unequal access to employment, markets, education and power do matter in the daily struggle of most people in the developing world, and do severely limit their capability to overcome their situation of poverty and general underdevelopment. Hence, discarding the rigidity of classical structuralist and neo-Marxist approaches is not to say that structural constraints do not matter. While neo-classical and developmentalist perspectives on migration and development tend to underestimate, structuralist perspectives tend to overestimate the importance of structural constraints. Hence, an improved theoretical perspective on migration and development has to be able to account for the role of structure—the constraining or enabling general political, institutional, economic social, and cultural context in which migration takes place—as well as agency—the limited but real capacity of individuals to overcome constraints and potentially reshape the structural context.

## 6. Pluralist views on migration and development interactions

The second half of the 1980s marked in several ways the end of not only rigid historical-structuralism, but also of rigid theoretical thinking in general. In this new era, social scientists, influenced by post-modernist thinking and Giddens' (1984) structuration theory<sup>11</sup>, sought to harmonize actor- and structure-oriented approaches. Recognition of the relevance of both structure and agency seems essential for the migration and development debate, as this enables us to better deal with the heterogeneity of migration impacts. In such a "pluralist" approach, the results of the structure-actor interactions allow for a greater variety of outcome than would have been allowed from either the single aggregation of individual decision making (Skeldon 1997:18) or from the unidirectional imperatives of structures.

This general paradigm shift in social theory has also deeply affected the specific migration and development debate. Over the 1980s and 1990s, the main contribution to thinking on migration and development came from the new economics of labour migration (NELM) theory. Combined with the so-called "livelihood approaches" as well as recent perspectives on migrant transnationalism, this provides a more nuanced perspective on migration and development, which integrates structure and actor perspectives, and gives room for explaining and interpreting the reciprocal and heterogeneous relationship between migration and wider development processes.

### 6.1. New economics of labour migration (NELM)

In the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called new economics of labour migration (NELM) emerged as a critical response to, and improvement of, neo-classical migration theory (Massey et al

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<sup>11</sup> Structuration theory emphasizes that structures, rules, and norms emerge as outcomes of people's daily practices and actions, both intended and unintended. These structural forms subsequently shape (enable, constrain) people's actions, not by strict determination—as structural approaches tend to assume—but within a possibilistic range. Although some individual action is routinised and mainly serves to reproduce structures, rules and institutions, other action has agency, serving to change the system and perhaps, in time, remake new rules (Giddens 1984). This constant recreation of structures through agency is what Giddens refers to as the recursive nature of social life, in which structures are considered as both medium and outcome of the reproduction of human practices.

1993:436). The new economics of labour migration theory rejects neo-classical models, which were evaluated as too individualistic and rigid to deal with the complex and diverse realities of the migration and development interactions. This new approach has gradually turned out to be a viable alternative to not only neo-classical but also to structuralist approaches, gaining increasing acceptance throughout the 1990s. It was particularly Stark (1978; 1991) who revitalized thinking on migration in and from the developing world by placing the behaviour of individual migrants in a wider societal context and by considering not the individual, but the family or the *household* as the most appropriate decision-making unit. This new approach allows for integrating factors other than individual income maximization as influencing migration decision-making. In this respect, Stark and Levhari (1982:191-192) argued that

During the last decade or so, the ruling economic explanation for rural-to-urban migration taking place in less developed countries (LDCs) has been the response to inter-sectoral expected incomes differential. . . . This is somewhat surprising, especially since during the very same period both risk and (especially) risk avoidance have assumed major significance in mainstream economics . . . the way variability in alternative rural earnings and in future urban earnings must figure in migrants' calculations is beyond the grasp of the expected-income hypothesis . . . It is suggested that an optimizing, risk-averse small-farmer family confronted with a subjectively risk-increasing situation manages to control the risk through diversification of its income portfolio via the placing of its best-suited member in the urban sector, which is independent from agricultural production.

The new economics of labour migration models migration as risk-sharing behavior of families or households. Better than individuals, households seem able to diversify their resources, such as labour, in order to minimize income risks (Stark & Levhari 1982). The fundamental assumption is that people, households and families act not only to maximize income but also to minimize and spread risks. Internal and international migration is perceived as a household response to income risk, as migrant remittances provide income insurance for households of origin. This risk-spreading motive can even explain the occurrence of migration in the absence of (expected) wage differentials. The basic idea is that for the household as a whole it may be a Pareto-superior strategy to have members migrate elsewhere, either as a means of risk sharing or as an investment in access to higher earnings streams (Lucas & Stark 1985:902).

Migration is not only perceived as household risk spreading strategy in order to stabilize income, but also as a strategy to overcome various market constraints. The new economics of labour migration places the household in imperfect credit (capital) and risk (insurance) markets that prevail in most developing countries (Stark 1985; Stark & Levhari 1982; Taylor 1986; 1999; Taylor & Wyatt 1996). Such markets are often weakly developed or difficult to access for non-elite groups. In particular through international remittances, migration can be

a household strategy to overcome such market constraints, and may potentially enable households to invest in productive activities and to improve their livelihoods (Stark 1980). While remittances do not play a role in neo-classical migration theory, within NELM they are perceived as one of the most essential motives for migrating.

Besides providing a radically different conceptualization of migration as a household strategy aiming at (a) diversifying the household's income portfolio; (b) increasing household income; and (c) overcoming constraints on economic activities and investments in the region of origin, the new economics of labour migration also criticized the very methodological design of most prior migration research. According to Taylor *et al.* (1996a:1),

prior work has been unduly pessimistic about the prospects for development as a result of international migration, largely because it has failed to take into account the complex, often indirect ways that migration and remittances influence the economic status of households and the communities that contain them.

This pertains to criticism of the lack of analytical rigor, the prevalence of deductive reasoning over empirical testing, as well as the important methodological deficiencies of much prior empirical work. NELM scholars claim that most studies on migration impact in sending societies consist of simplified, non-comparative remittance-use studies that disregard income fungibility and the indirect, community-wide impacts of migration as well as rather “impressionistic” assessments about migration impacts, and are in their very methodological design often not able to capture the complex relationships between migration and development (Taylor 1999).

## 6.2. Migration as a household livelihood strategy

NELM has striking – though as yet unobserved – conceptual parallels with the *livelihood approaches* that have evolved as of the late 1970s among geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists conducting micro-research in developing countries. They argued that the poor cannot only be seen as passive victims of global capitalist forces but try to actively improve their livelihoods within the constraining conditions they live in. This points to the fundamental role of *human agency* (Lieten & Nieuwenhuys 1989).

A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living (Carney 1998). A livelihood encompasses not

only the households' income generating activities, but also the social institutions, intra-household relations, and mechanisms of access to resources through the life cycle (Ellis 1998). For their livelihoods, people and households draw on five categories of assets (or capitals): natural, social, human, physical, and financial (Carney 1998). A livelihood *strategy* can then be defined as a strategic or deliberate choice of a combination of activities by households and their individual members to maintain, secure, and improve their livelihoods. This particular choice is based on (selective) access to assets, perceptions of opportunities, as well as aspirations of actors. Since these differ from household to household and from individual to individual, this explains why livelihood strategies tend to be so heterogeneous.

The emergence of the livelihood concept has meant a departure from rigid and deductive historical-structuralist views towards a more empirical approach. This went along with the insight that people—generally, but all the more in the prevailing circumstances of economic, political and environmental uncertainty and hardship—organize their livelihoods not individually but within wider social contexts, such as households, village communities, and ethnic groups. For many social settings, the household was recognized as the most relevant social group and hence the most appropriate unit of analysis, acknowledging that the forms of households vary across time, space, and socio-economic groups (McDowell & de Haan 1997:3).

In this context, migration can be seen as one of the main elements of the strategies to diversify, secure, and, potentially, durably improve, rural households, which is often combined with other strategies, such as agricultural intensification and local non-farm activities (Bebbington 1999; Ellis 2000; McDowell & de Haan 1997; Scoones 1998). It is increasingly recognized that labour migration is often more than a short-term survival or crisis coping strategy or a stereotypical “flight from misery”. Rather, it is often a deliberate decision to improve livelihoods, enable investments (Bebbington 1999:2027), and help to reduce fluctuations in the family income that has (often) been entirely dependent on climatic vagaries (De Haan et al 2000:28; McDowell & de Haan 1997:18). Migration can then be seen as a means to acquire a wider range of assets which insure against future shocks and stresses (De Haan et al 2000:30). There is no *a priori* reason why this diversification-through-migration argument cannot also be extended to urban households.

This comes surprisingly close to the premises of NELM, and both approaches can be integrated if we see internal as well as international migration as part of a broader *household livelihood strategy* to diversify income sources and overcome social, economic, and institutional development constraints in the place of origin. While livelihood approaches meant for sociologists and anthropologists a departure from rather rigid structuralism towards more

pluralist approaches, neo-classical and developmentalist migration economists moved in the opposite direction. The development of NELM as of the late 1970s—parallel to the emergence of livelihood approaches!—meant a departure from neo-classical and actor-oriented approaches towards a household-level based theoretical perspective recognizing the relevance of both agency and structural constraints to development.

Interestingly, NELM adopted a household-oriented approach that was already common in other fields of social science. In this respect, Lucas and Stark (1985:901) stated that economists have begun to address questions of household composition more traditionally posed by anthropologists and sociologists. Furthermore, Lucas and Stark (1985:915) proposed to

extend the recent intergenerational view of the household to a spatial dimension. . . . and dualistic theories of development must be revised: Instead of an urban sector and a rural sector, each with its own populace benefiting from the sectoral-specific speeds of development, the family straddles the two. Classes cease to be only peasants and workers, and a hybrid peasants-worker group emerges. This perception is not new to anthropologists but has not previously been integrated with the economics of the household.

Empirical research on rural livelihoods confirmed the latter argument, and demonstrated that internal and international migrants tend to maintain close links with their communities of origin over much longer periods than has previously been assumed (McDowell & de Haan 1997:1). It is not either migration or activities at the origin, but often both. As we will see, recent scholarly work on transnationalism has also stressed that households and larger social groups can maintain trans-local and trans-national social links, livelihoods and identities over sustained periods. The important methodological and analytical consequence of all this seems to be that the impact of a migration strategy cannot be evaluated outside its relationship with other livelihood strategies, that is, the entire portfolio of multi-local and multi-sectoral household activities (Stark 1991). Research attempting to isolate migration and migrants from their wider social and economic context, and other livelihood activities, is therefore not able to assess the relation between migration and broader transformation or development processes.

Migration and employment at the origin should not be seen as mutually exclusive possibilities, but are in fact often combined. Without a household approach, such multiple strategies cannot be captured. This view, which is shared by both NELM and livelihoods approaches seems to better reflect the realities of daily life for millions of households in developing countries than neo-classical or structuralist approaches. The livelihood approach seems useful to model and gain insight into the way households live and shape their lives, and how these

lives are practically embedded into a broader institutional context. According to De Haan *et al.* (2000:1), migration is not an

atomistic reaction to economic or environmental pressure, but it is embedded in societal rules and norms. Two kinds of institutions have a significant impact on migration: migration networks and households' structure and management. These institutions determine the contribution migration can make to improving livelihoods, but this link is by no means direct or simple.

The choice of the household as the primary unit of analysis can then be seen as a kind of optimum strategy or a compromise between actor and structure approaches, acknowledging that the forms of households vary across time, space, and social groups. In perceiving migration as a *household livelihood strategy*, we acknowledge that structural forces leave at least some room for agency. Household approaches seem particularly applicable in developing countries where for many people it is not possible to secure the family income through private insurance markets or government programs (Bauer & Zimmermann 1998), increasing the importance of implicit contracts within the family.

### 6.3. A transnational perspective on migration and development

The rise of new economics and livelihood perspectives on migration and development have coincided with a third trend in migration studies, that is, the “transnational turn” in the study of the settlement and integration of migrant communities in receiving countries (Castles & Miller 2003; Faist 2004; Glick Schiller *et al* 1991). There has been increasing recognition of the increased possibilities for migrants and their families to live transnationally and to adopt transnational identities (cf. Guarnizo *et al* 2003; Vertovec 1999). This relates to the radically improved technical possibilities for migrants to foster links with their societies of origin through the (mobile) telephone, fax, (satellite) television and the internet, and to remit money through globalised banking systems or informal channels. This increasingly enables migrants and their families to foster double loyalties, to travel back and forth, to relate to people, and to work and to do business simultaneously in distant places (De Haas 2005; Guarnizo *et al* 2003). In other words, there is increasing scope for migrants and their families to pursue transnational livelihoods.

This *de facto* transnationalisation of migrants' lives has also challenged assimilationist models of migrant integration, as well as the modernist political construct of the nation-state and citizenship. The implication is that clear-cut dichotomies of ‘origin’ or ‘destination’ and categories such as ‘permanent’, ‘temporary’, and ‘return’ migration are increasingly difficult to sus-



tain in a world in which the lives of migrants are increasingly characterised by circulation and simultaneous commitment to two or more societies (De Haas 2005). This has fundamental implication for the study of migration and development, because this implies that integration in receiving societies and commitment to origin societies are not necessarily substitutes, but can be complements.

It has long been assumed that migrants' integration would necessarily coincide with a gradual loosening of ties with societies of origin. This explains much of the prior pessimism on the sustainability of remittances as well as the fact that migrants' contribution to development in origin countries was typically linked to *return* migration. However, it has become increasingly clear that this is not necessarily the case, and that many migrant groups maintain strong transnational ties over sustained periods. Migrants' engagement with origin country development is not conditional on their return, but can be sustained through telecommunication, holiday visits and pendular or circular migration patterns.

In this way, transnational ties can become transgenerational. This is exemplified by persistent and increasing remittances, transnational marriages and the involvement of "Diaspora" group (such as "home town associations"), often belonging to second generations, in social, cultural, political and economic affairs of their origin countries. It seems factually incorrect to automatically interpret migrants' commitment towards their countries of origin as a manifestation of their inability or unwillingness to integrate. Conversely, migrants' deeper involvement in their receiving societies does not necessarily lead to less significant commitment to their countries of origin. Although this might indeed be sometimes the case for some migrant groups under certain circumstances, the reverse is also possible (Snel et al 2006). After all, successful and 'integrated' migrants generally also dispose of increased cognitive and financial capacity for setting up enterprises and participating in public debate in their countries of origin (De Haas 2005).

In fact, the transnational turn in the study of migrant communities corroborates with NELM and livelihood approaches, stressing the need to see international migration as an integral part of *transnational* livelihood strategies pursued by households and other social groups. Return visits and return migration, remittances, transnational business activities as well as investments and civil society involvement in origin countries are all expressions of the transnational character of migrants' life. The insight that migrants often maintain long-term ties with origin countries and that integration does not necessarily preclude or can even encourage such transnational engagement, casts doubt on the assumption by structuralist migration theory that the departure of migrants would *automatically* represent a loss in the form of a brain or brawn drain.

## 7. New empirical insights into migration and development

The new economics of labour migration, livelihood as well as transnational approaches towards migration can all be situated within a broader paradigm shift in social theory towards approaches attempting to harmonise actor and structure approaches. This has all led to a more optimistic assessment of the development potential of migration as well as the ability of individuals and households to overcome structural development constraints through the agency as embodied in their choice to migrate as a strategy by households and other social groups to diversify, secure and improve their livelihoods.

Since 1990, there has been a surge in well-designed empirical studies, which generally confirm these more optimistic hypotheses. The accumulated body of empirical evidence has countered the negative views of the “migrant syndrome”, cumulative causation and historical-structuralist approaches. Recent (cf. Agunias 2006; De Haas 2007c; Katseli et al 2006; Özden & Schiff 2005; Rapoport & Docquier 2005) and less recent (Taylor et al 1996a; b) reviews, have pointed at the *potentially* positive role of migrants and remittances in social, economic and political transformation process in countries and communities of origin. This section will synthesise the key findings of the empirical reviews cited above.

In line with the propositions of the new economics of labour migration and livelihood approaches, the accumulated empirical evidence suggests that, in most cases, migration is typically *not* a desperate response to destitution or a “flight from misery”—a last resort to escape from extreme conditions of poverty and unemployment. In line with the new economics of labour migration and livelihood approaches, most evidence supports the view that migration rather is a deliberate attempt by social groups (typically, but not exclusively, households) to spread income risks, to improve their social and economic status and, hence, to overcome local development constraints. This corroborates transnational migration models, countering classical theories of migrant assimilation and integration which predict that migrants gradually cut ties with home communities after settlement. On the contrary, NELM and transnational livelihood approaches tend to see migration as an expression of strong social bonds and of the wish to improve the lives of those left behind.

Most empirical evidence also corroborates the new economics hypothesis that that migration is generally a reaction to *relative* rather than to *absolute* deprivation. Only under certain crisis circumstances, migration is rather a *survival* or *coping strategy*. This clearly refutes neoclassical and associated push-pull models as well as structuralist approaches viewing migration

either as a linear function of spatial income and other opportunity differentials or as the result of the impoverishment provoked by the incorporation of countries and regions in the capitalist economy, uprooting their populations and forcing them to migrate in order to survive.

International remittances generally help to diversify and also to substantially raise household income. They have a crucial insurance function in protecting people from destabilising the effects of absent or ill functioning markets, failing state policies and a lack of state-provided social security. Also on the national level, there is substantial evidence that remittances have proved to be an increasingly important, less volatile, less pro-cyclical, and therefore a more reliable source of foreign currency than other capital flows to developing countries. However, the observation that remittances significantly contribute to income stability and welfare in developing country does not necessarily imply that they contribute to poverty alleviation. As migration is a selective process, most international remittances do not tend to flow to the poorest members of communities nor to the poorest countries. However, poor non-migrant families are often affected indirectly through the economy-wide effects of remittance expenditure on wages, prices and employment in migrant sending communities. Therefore, most studies conclude that international remittances reduce poverty, although to a limited extent.

Recent empirical work has also challenged the assumption that migration has automatically a negative effect on income inequality between rural and urban areas and within migrant sending communities. Although such an effect has indeed been found in various studies, the impacts of migration on income inequality in migrant sending communities differ depending on the selectivity of migration and how this selectivity changes over time. Pioneer migrants tend to be from relatively wealthy households, and migration therefore often has the initial effect of deepening inequality. The resulting increase in relative deprivation among nonmigrants tends to boost their desire to migrate. In later stages, migration selectivity has the tendency to decrease, primarily due to the establishment of migrant networks and evolution of migration systems, which, *ceteris paribus*, reduce the costs and risks of migration. As a consequence of this diffusion process, the initially negative effect of remittances on income equality might therefore be dampened or even reversed (cf. Rapoport & Docquier 2005; Stark et al 1988). This might eventually decrease migration incentives based on relative deprivation.

Several studies have indicated that, especially on the longer term, remittance receiving households often have a *higher* propensity to invest than nonmigrant households, challenging dim views that migrants would “fritter away their remittance earnings on personal consumption” (Adams 1991:719). Moreover, it is clear now that the much-criticized consumptive expenses and “non-productive investments” such as the much-despised housing, as long as they are done locally, can have highly positive impacts by providing nonmigrants with labour

and income. This coincided with criticism on arbitrary definitions of “productive investments” (Conway & Cohen 1998; Taylor 1999), reflecting rather narrow views on what actually constitutes “development”. Adopting a capabilities perspective on development as developed by Sen (1999), expenditure in areas such as education, health, food, medicines and housing, as well as community projects in education, health and recreational facilities can greatly enhance people’s wellbeing and capabilities, and should therefore not be discarded as “non-developmental”.

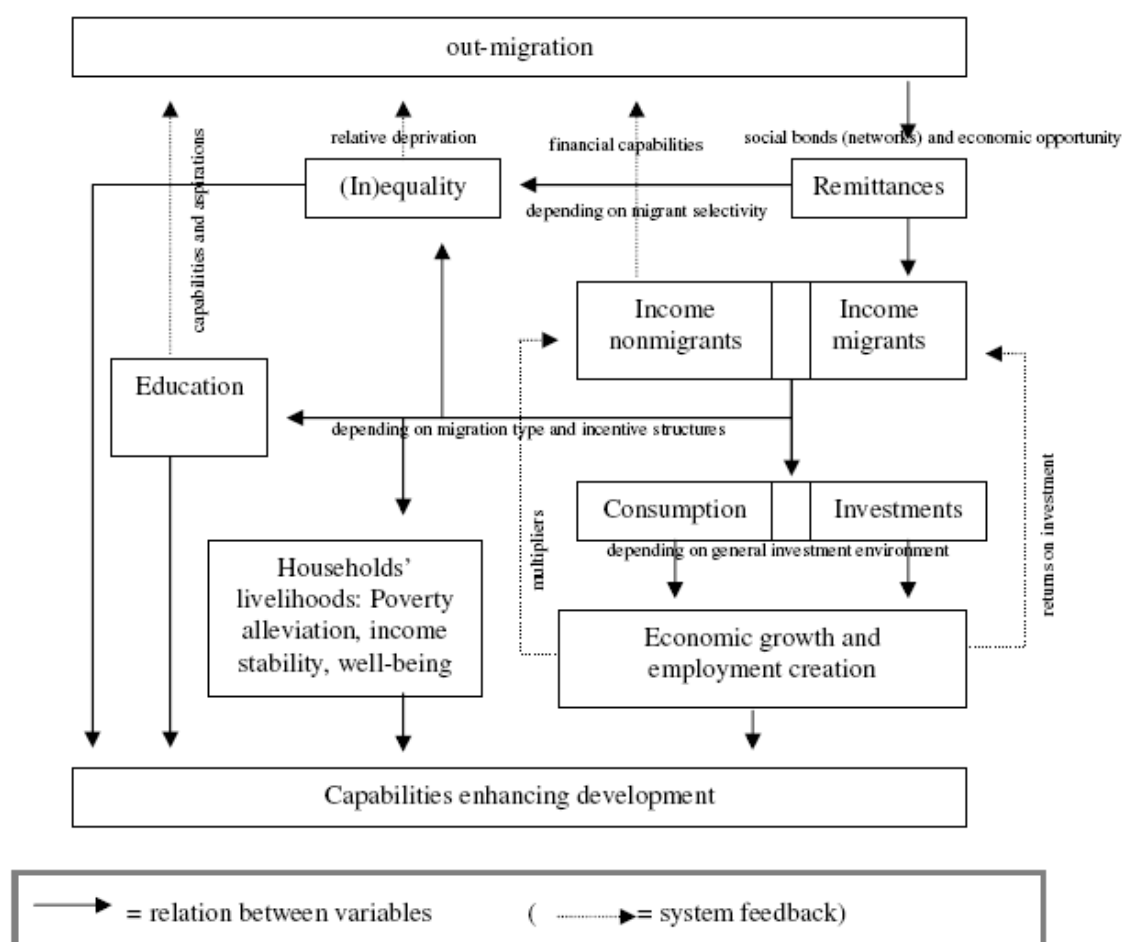
Also the classical brain drain hypothesis has been increasingly questioned over the past decade, to give room to a much more nuanced picture. Besides the fact that not all migrants are highly skilled, the brain drain seems to be only truly massive in a minority of countries. Furthermore, a brain drain can be accompanied by a significant brain gain (Lowell & Findlay 2002; Stark et al 1997), because the prospect of moving abroad may stimulate the incentive to study among stay-behinds (WorldBank 2005). However, migration might also create *negative* incentive structures for education. This seems specifically the case in migration systems predominated by low skilled, often undocumented migration, where few if any positive externalities of education can be expected (McKenzie 2006).

Besides their economic role, migrants often play an important and positive role in the societal and political debate and civil society in countries of origin. However, they may also contribute both to sustained conflicts, for instance by providing support for warring parties (Nyberg-Sorensen et al 2002; Van Hear 2004), and others have argued that their role might be overstated because many case studies focus on the minority of truly transnationally active migrants (Guarnizo et al 2003). Furthermore, such analysis tends to be value-laden. There is no objective, scientific yardstick to determine which direction of political change is ultimately desirable.

Whereas views on the impact of international remittances on development in migrant sending communities and regions have recently inclined towards the positive side, the impact of remittances on national growth are unclear (cf. WorldBank 2006:xiii). All in all, it is unlikely that migrants and remittances alone can trigger sustained national development and economic growth. Although remittances play an increasingly vital role in securing and actually improving livelihoods of millions of people in developing world, it would be naïve to expect that remittances alone can solve more structural development obstacles, such as an unstable political environment, misguided macro-economic policies, unsafety, legal insecurity, bureaucracy, corruption and deficient infrastructure (De Haas 2007c).

If states fail to implement effective political and economic reform, migration and remittances are unlikely to result in nation-wide sustainable development (Gammage 2006; Taylor et al 2006). However, if development in origin countries takes a positive turn, if countries stabilise and economic growth starts to take off, migrants are likely to be among the first to join in and recognise such new opportunities and, and reinforce these positive trends through investing, circulating and returning to their origin countries. Such mutually reinforcing migration-development processes have occurred in several former emigration countries as diverse as Spain, Taiwan, South Korea, and, recently, Turkey.

**Figure 3. Conceptual framework of “pluralist” migration and development interactions (community level)**



This evidence exemplifies the danger of generalising about the economic, social and cultural effects of migration and remittances. It also highlights that the outcomes of analyses of impacts on poverty, inequality and development strongly depend on the relative weights attached to distributional versus mean income objectives (cf. Stark et al 1988:309) as well as spatial and temporal scales of analysis (cf. De Haas 2006a; Jones 1998)

However, migration has at least the proven potential to diversify and increase income, well-being, productivity, and, to a certain extent, alleviate poverty. However, the extent to which households succeed in achieving these goals critically depends on the type, destination and selectivity of migration as well as the severity of development constraints and related institutions in origin societies. Figure 3 summarises the accumulated insight into the various mechanisms through which migration can affect development in migrant sending areas in the short to medium term, and how this impact may affect migration in its own right. This conceptual framework draws on and combines insights derives from capability approaches towards development, transitional migration theory as well as the new economics of labour migration (NELM) and transnational livelihood approaches.

## 8. Synthesis

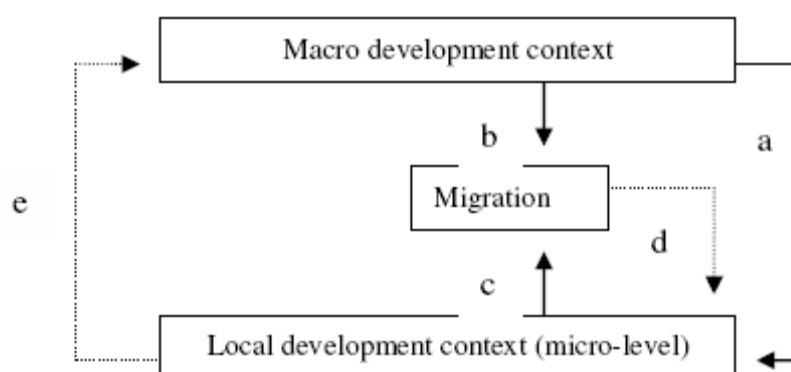
The above analysis has shown that, on theoretical grounds, it is not possible to comprehend the developmental impact of migration without understanding the structural, fundamentally *developmental* causes of migration. It has also exemplified the importance of linking theories on the developmental *causes* and *consequences* of migration, in order to create a single dynamic perspective approaching the migration-development relation as reciprocally related *processes*. This is why transitional migration theory – which we tried to elaborate in this paper by drawing on dynamic and process-oriented migration models such as the mobility transition (Zelinsky 1971), Skeldon's (1997) dynamic conceptualization of shifting global migration and development tiers and the migration hump (Martin & Taylor 1996) – has more heuristic power than structuralist theory or static and deterministic “push-pull” models as well as other equilibrium and gravity approaches, which erroneously assume that migration is linearly dependent on factors such as poverty, income differentials and population growth.

The analysis has also exemplified that migration (1) is a process which is an integral part of broader transformation processes embodied in the term “development”, but (2) also has its internal, self-sustaining and self-undermining dynamics, and (3) impacts on these broader transformation processes in its own right. Besides a response by individuals and households

to changes in the general context but, migration also as a *cause* of social, cultural, economic, and institutional changes in the local, regional and national development context, in which subsequent decisions on migration and investments are made. Thus, *migration is not an independent variable explaining change, but is an endogenous variable, an integral part of change itself in the same degree as it may enable further change*. This is why it is more correct to refer to the *reciprocal* relationship between migration and broader development processes instead of the—one-way—impact of migration on development.

Figure 4 depicts this reciprocal nature of migration and development interactions. In the analysis of the factors underlying the geographical differentiation in migration and development relationships, a distinction can be made between (I) the development context at the general, macro (national, international) level; (II) the development context at the local or regional level; and (III) the factors related to the migrant and her direct social and economic environment—in most cases the household. These three sets of variables are reciprocally linked through various direct functional relations and feedback mechanisms.

**Figure 4. General conceptual framework for analysing migration-development interactions**



- a. The macro-level development context—the above-regional (national, international) whole of economic, political, social, and economic structures—partly determines the local development context, for instance through public infrastructure, policies, social facilities, legislature, taxation, market access or regional development programs.
- b. The macro-context also determines the extent to which there are *opportunities* to migrate, either internally or abroad, for instance through immigration policies, labour demand and,

income levels. Such opportunity structures affect the magnitude, nature (undocumented, legal, labour, political, family migration), and the (initial) selectivity of migration.

- c. The local development context determines to what extent people are able to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have (following the definition of development by Sen 1997:1959) through local livelihood activities. The extent to which this is possible affects their (i) *aspiration* to migrate. A second way through which the local development context affects the propensity to migrate is the influence of development on the (ii) *capability* to migrate through drawing on (a) financial, (b) social and (c) human capital. Thus, people's propensity to migrate is seen as a function of their aspirations and capabilities to do so.
- d. In its turn, the migration process affects the local development context through its reciprocal effects (system feedbacks) on labour supply, consumption, investments, inequality, social stratification, relative deprivation, culture, institutions, perceptions, and aspirations (for more specification, see figure 3). The nature of these impacts is spatially heterogeneous, and is contingent on the characteristics of the local development context as set by the behaviour of previous actors. In their turn, such migration-induced processes of social and economic change affect people's (i) *aspirations* (for instance through increasing inequality and relative deprivation) and (ii) *capabilities* to migrate (arrow c), while the creation social capital in the form of migrant networks tends to facilitate additional movement (cf. Massey 1990). These feedback mechanisms often lead to the emergence of largely self-sustaining migration systems, sometimes irrespective of the initial causes of migration (Massey et al 1993).
- e. Changes in the local development context—for instance as the result of migration—may eventually affect the macro-level development context, albeit to a *limited extent*, because of the limited magnitude of migration and remittances and the predominantly individual, family and community character of migration. For instance, the much-celebrated micro-level at which remittances are transferred is not only their strength, but also their main weakness, since this also implies that individual migrants are generally not able to remove macro-level development constraints (De Haas 2005).

Empirical and theoretical advances in the study of migration and development have challenged the unrealistic determinism of both the functionalist (“optimist”) and structuralist (“pessimist”) perspectives. This has given rise to a more subtle vision, in which, depending on the specific development context, both positive and negative development responses to migration are possible. Recent empirical evidence has generally confirmed the propositions of the



new economics of labour migration (NELM) and related household and transnational approaches, which all stress the *real* ability of individuals and the household to which they belong to overcome spread income risks, increase income and to overcome local development constraints such as failing markets and other institutions through the process of migrating.

Yet, also these new “pluralist” approaches, or, more precisely, the way in which they are commonly interpreted, are not unproblematic. This is particularly related to (1) the potential reification of the household as a decision making unit; (2) the almost tautological way in which they tend to link *motives* to *consequences* of migration; (3) disciplinary chauvinism and incommensurability problems and the related inability or unwillingness to overcome disciplinary divisions and, and (4) the inaccurate reinterpretation of pluralist approaches such as NELM as “optimistic”.

First, although household approaches often seem the best compromise to harmonise actor and structure approaches, there is the risk of reifying the household, when it is seen as a unit with a clear will, plans, strategy, and aims (Lieten & Nieuwenhuys 1989:8). Criticism on household approaches has focused on the underlying assumption of household as a monolithic, altruistic unit taking unanimous decisions to the advantage of the whole group (Carling 2005; Rodenburg 1997). This may mask intra-household age, gender and other inequalities. A strict household approach would also disguise the importance of migration-relevant social bonds with non-household family, community members and friends. It would also rule out agency of individual household members and, hence, their potential ability to revolt against the will of powerful household members by, for instance, migrating without consent. Moreover, a one-sided focus on would households obscures the developmental role that migrant's organisations such as “home town associations” can play (Lacroix 2005; Newland & Patrick 2004).

Second, there is a problematic circularity in the way in which NELM and livelihood approaches tend to link initial migration motives and strategies to consequences of migration. The direct link that, in particular, NELM draws between motives of migration and the act of remitting, is often more unsettled in practice (Lindley 2007). For instance, a person migrating abroad with the *intention* to earn money to allow her household to invest in a private enterprise might end up not doing so because of a political or economic crisis in the origin country or because her transnational family bonds weaken more rapidly than anticipated. Through their frequent bias towards transnationally active migrants, case-study based empirical work within the study of transnational livelihoods does often not pay sufficient attention to counterfactual cases of migrants following a more classical path of assimilation and cutting of trans-

national ties. The other way around, a refugee who primarily migrates to escape life-threatening circumstances, may end up remitting substantial amount of money or become a transnational entrepreneur (Lindley 2007). The same can be applied to student migrants who might intend to return after graduating, but who often end up working and remitting money.

More in general, this reflects the more fundamental problem that simple categories to characterise migrants (economic, refugee, asylum, family, student) primarily reflect bureaucratic and legal categories but conceal the often complex, mixed and shifting motivations of migrants (IMI 2006:8). For all these reasons, it would be preferable to remove the “L” from “NELM” and to extend this theory to all forms of migratory mobility. It also shows that migration is not necessarily a preconceived “strategy” to improve livelihoods. This is another reason to broaden our concept of development towards a capabilities perspective, which enables us to perceive migration within a broader framework of (economic, social or political) opportunity differentials and socially and temporally differentiated capabilities and aspirations of people to move.

Third, notwithstanding the obvious parallels between transitional migration theory, the new economics of labour migration, livelihood and transnational approaches, there is only a very limited ability to overcome disciplinary divisions between anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and economists studying similar phenomena (migration-development interactions) from different analytical and methodological angles. For instance, NELM, notwithstanding its invaluable empirical and theoretical contribution to migration and development studies, is characterized by a certain disciplinary chauvinism and naïve logical positivist beliefs in the nature of scientific progress. Although NELM’s criticism of the weak methodological foundations, the lack of analytical rigor and the “impressionistic” (Taylor 1999) character of most prior work seems valid to a large extent, it would be erroneous to equate “qualitative” with “impressionistic”, and to infer that quantitative modelling is the one and only good methodology. The other way around, there is a lack of recognition of the progress made by NELM by migration researchers belonging to other disciplines. The mutual rejection of qualitative vs. quantitative methodologies over the disciplinary division between “hard” and “soft” social sciences partly reflects incommensurability problems (see above) which can probably never be totally resolved. To a considerable extent, fundamental divisions exist between the worlds of the different disciplines studying migration, in particular between the non-economic and economic social sciences. However, it would be extremely useful to increase the openness for mutual learning and to recognise the relative strengths of different methodological approaches instead of continuing rather unproductive infighting.

For instance, quantitative household surveys have proven to be an extremely useful tool to increase insight in migration-development interactions, which many researchers applying qualitative methods have unfortunately ignored or rejected. However, such surveys are typically not able to measure structural development constraints on the macro-level, such as corruption and political repression. Even on the household level, several non-economic dimensions of development are notoriously difficult or impossible to quantify. Instead of considering quantitative modelling as the hallmark of “good” migration research, I would rather argue that the choice of a particular research methodology depends on the specific research question. Studies on migration and development should also leave room for qualitative, non-survey based, research techniques, which unveil patterns and structures that surveys are usually not able to capture. In general, there is an enormous potential for combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to improve our understanding of the complex and multifaceted migration-development relationship.

The lack of theoretical rootedness and largely descriptive nature of much empirical work has haunted the improvement of theories. As a result of the lack of a common theoretical thread, much empirical work – especially from outside migration economics – remains isolated, scattered, and theoretically underexplored. Real progress in the understanding of the factors determining the fundamental *heterogeneity* of migration and development interactions is only possible if more empirical work from the various social sciences is designed to test theoretically derived hypotheses and, hence, to contribute to the generalized understanding of migration-development interactions.

Fourth, micro-empirical evidence highlighting the often positive role of migration and remittances in households’ livelihoods is often inaccurately taken as evidence that migration does stimulate development in more general terms and on the macro-level. However, to argue from “migration and remittances durably improve households’ living standards” to “migration stimulates national development” is to commit an ecological fallacy by transferring inferences made on a micro-level scale of analysis to a macro-level scale of analysis. Obviously, development is a highly complex and multifaceted process, involving and requiring structural social, political and institutional changes, which cannot realistically be achieved by providing wellbeing enhancing, social insurance and investment-enabling capital injections to migrant sending household and communities *only*.

By postulating that migration *is* a household strategy to overcome local constraints to economic production and development, in particular NELM scholars sometimes suggest that migration “thus” contributes to development in sending areas. Although this circular reasoning is not the original proposition of NELM, this is the way it is often interpreted, leading a

perception of NELM as belonging to the “migration optimists” (for a striking example, see Taylor 1999:64). This is unfortunate, because suggesting an automatic mechanism through which migration leads to development or the reverse—as functionalists and structuralists have done, respectively—would be to ignore the accumulated evidence pointing to the heterogeneous nature of migration-development interactions. Although it is clear that the laws of cumulative causation have no overall legitimacy, the lesson should not be that the optimistic viewpoint was correct because the pessimistic framework predictions were incorrect (Keely & Tran 1989:524).

As Heinemeijer *et al.* (1977) already observed, development in migrant-sending regions is a *prerequisite* for return and/or investment rather than a consequence of migration. Migration cannot be blamed for a perceived lack of development, as the nature of migration-development interactions is fundamentally contingent on more general development conditions. While stressing the developmental potential of migration, the now substantial body of empirical evidence also highlights the complexity and sheer heterogeneity and socially differentiated nature of migration-development interactions. This also provides a warning against recent, naively optimistic views on migration and development through pointing at the real but fundamentally limited ability of individual migrants to overcome structural constraints and, hence, the paramount importance of the more general development context in determining the extent to which the development *potential* of migration can be realised.

Depending on this context, migration may enable people to retreat from, just as much as to engage and invest in social, political and economic activities in origin countries. This is a key observation. It is the very capabilities-enhancing potential of migration that also increases the freedom of migrants and their families affectively withdraw from societies of origin. The current research agenda should be to better understand the spatial and social heterogeneity in migration and development relationships. Such a perspective should incorporate both agency and structure, and recognize that migration decisions are usually taken within broader social (e.g., household, community) and political-economic (e.g., absent or hardly accessible markets) contexts, which can form constraints (or incentives) for development.

## 9. Conclusion

The above analysis has shown that the scholarly and policy debates on migration and development have tended to swing back and forth like a pendulum, from developmentalist optimism in the 1950s and 1960s, to structuralist and neo-Marxist pessimism and scepticism

over the 1970s and 1980s, to more nuanced views influenced by the new economics of labour migration, “livelihood” approaches and the transnational turn in migration studies as of the 1990s. Since 2000, there has been a sudden renaissance of optimistic views, in particular in the policy debate, as well as a boom in empirical work on migration and development.

The analysis has also exemplified that discursive shifts in the scholarly and policy debate on migration and development should therefore be primarily seen as part of more general paradigm shifts in social and development theory. For instance, the shift in the 1990s from plainly pessimistic to more nuanced and, since 2000, plainly optimistic views can not be dissociated from a more general shift in social theory from grand structuralist or functionalist theories towards more pluralist, hybrid and structuralist approaches attempting to integrate structure and actor perspectives.

It has been frequently argued that it is possible to combine and integrate different theoretical perspectives on migration (Massey et al 1993; 1998). However, attempts to combine different theoretical perspectives are more problematic than sometimes suggested due to incommensurability issues and associated disciplinary divisions. For instance, the transitional perspective proposed in this paper is *fundamentally* conflicting with functionalist and structuralist theory, and attempts to compare or combine them with transitional models almost inevitably runs into incommensurability problems. As Kuhn (1962) argued, proponents of different paradigms live in different worlds, use different vocabularies, and use different criteria determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions in terms of methodology and analysis. Each paradigm therefore has the tendency to satisfy the criteria it sets for itself and to reject the very problem definition as well as evaluation criteria used by other paradigms (Kuhn 1962:109).

Because of this circularity, there are no objective, “scientific” criteria against which to externally examine the superiority of competing paradigms, the evaluation of which therefore inevitably involves non-scientific values. This is for instance evident in the diametrically opposed analysis of “dependency”, for instance on remittances, in structuralist and new economics of labour migration approaches. Ultimately, differentiating valuations of migration in its reciprocal relation to development are strongly related to differentiating *a priori* assumptions about what actually constitutes development. The above study of evolution of migration and development theory does corroborate Kuhn’s theory, in the sense that progress has not been a cumulative, but rather a revolutionary process in which this field of study has been reconstructed three times based on new theoretical and methodological fundamentals.

This raises the more fundamental question whether the recent shift towards highly optimistic views reflects a veritable change in migration-development interactions, the use of other methodological and analytical tools, or is rather the deductive echo of a general paradigm shift in research and policy away from dependency and state-centrist to neo-classical and neoliberal views *in general*. In social science, structuralist theory has become increasingly discredited. This has led to less negative interpretations of dependency and a more positive value being attributed to the global incorporation and capitalization of regions and countries in the developing world, a process of which migration is an integral part. Current optimism on the development potential of migration and development also has a strong ideological dimension, its fit very well into (neo) liberal political philosophies. On a critical note, Kapur (2003) has pointed at the ideological roots of recent remittance euphoria. He argued that remittances strike the right cognitive chords, and fit in with a communitarian, 'third way' approach, exemplifying the principle of self-help: "Immigrants, rather than governments, then become the biggest provider of "foreign aid"" (Kapur 2003:10).

There is a real danger that amnesia regarding previous empirical and theoretical work leads to naïve, uninformed optimism reminiscent of earlier developmentalist beliefs. The accumulated empirical and theoretical evidence stress the fundamentally heterogeneous nature of migration-development interactions as well as their contingency on spatial and temporal scales of analysis and more general processes of social and economic change, which should forestall any blanket assertions on migration-development interactions. Policy and scholarly discourses naively celebrating migration, remittances and transnational engagement as self-help development "from below" also shift attention away from the relevance of structural constraints and the real but limited ability of individuals to overcome these as well as the important role states and international institutions continue to play in shaping favourable conditions for social and economic development to occur.

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